

'Arabs should be jealous of euro'

RIYADH (AFP) — The launch of Europe's first-ever common currency, the euro, marks a new stage in the continent's unification and should be viewed jealously by Arabs who are unable to unify themselves, a Saudi daily said Saturday. "With the euro, Europe has unified," the Al Madina newspaper said. "As Arabs... we are a little jealous of what others have managed to achieve and we have not, and regret that the Arab Nation has become... which tears itself apart at the expense of all that might unify it," said the daily, which like the rest of the Saudi media, generally reflects the government's views. Numerous political and territorial conflicts have marred relations within the Arab World since the Arab League was created in 1945 in a bid for greater unity and common policies. Most recently member states have been unable to agree on the holding of a summit to discuss the Iraq crisis following U.S.-British air and missile attacks.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جordan Times يومية سياسية تصدر بالإنجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الرأي

Volume 24 Number 7034

AMMAN SUNDAY, JANUARY 3, 1999, RAMADAN 16, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Paper accuses Saddam Hussein of killing 5,000 Egyptians

CAIRO (AP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is responsible for the death of more than 5,000 Egyptians in 1988, a government-run newspaper said Saturday. In an unusual two-page editorial, Aythar Al Yom demanded that Saddam be tried in an international court. The allegation is the latest salvo in the war of words that erupted between Iraq and Egypt last week when Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak accused Saddam of provoking the U.S.-British airstrikes against Iraq on Dec. 16-19 (see page 2 story).

U.N. says second chartered plane downed in Angola

LUANDA (R) — The United Nations observer mission in Angola said on Saturday a second U.N.-chartered aircraft had been shot down in the central region of the country. A U.N. spokesman said the aircraft had been carrying seven U.N. workers to Luanda from the central city of Huambo, scene of fierce fighting between government troops and the rebel UNITA movement.

Britons can bet on streakers, Clinton and queen

LONDON (R) — Britons were offered a chance on Saturday to make a string of off-beat New Year bets — from Queen Elizabeth abdicating to a streaker enlivening parliament. Bookmaker William Hill, pandering to the British penchant for quirky bets, offered odds of 25-1 that the monarch would step down. Her son Charles marrying ex-mayor Tiggy Legge-Bourke was rated a 100-1 shot. A streaker in the House of Commons was rated a 16-1 probability while a divorce for President Clinton was offered as a 10-1 wager.

Saudi man beats up doctor over daughter's death

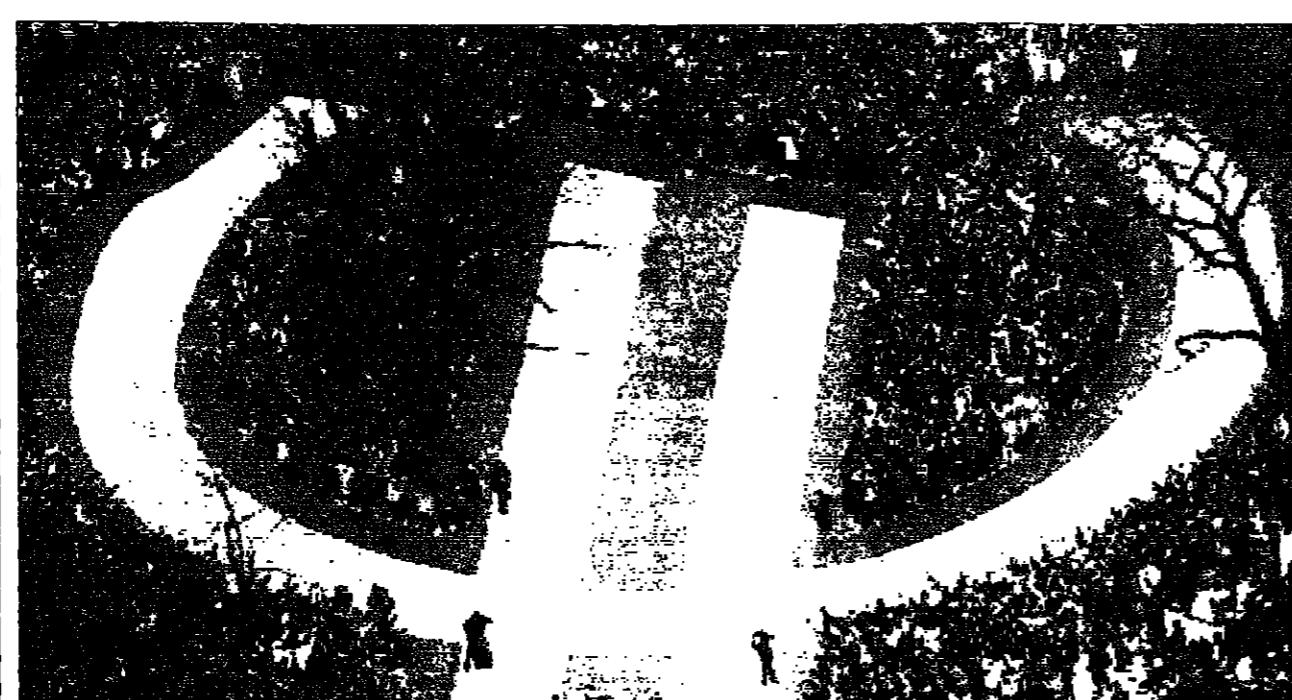
RIYADH (AFP) — A Saudi national beat up a doctor after his daughter died of a snake bite, the Al Bilad daily reported Saturday. The doctor failed to explain to the father that his daughter had died before he was admitted to hospital, but he refused to believe this and accused the physician of gross negligence. The battered doctor has registered a complaint with local police in the Southwest of the kingdom and an enquiry has been opened, the newspaper said.

New Year's massacre in Sicilian bar

RAGUSA (AFP) — Five men were shot dead in an execution-style killing in a bar near this Sicilian town on Saturday, police said. The five were drinking coffee, reading newspapers and chatting in the bar in Vittoria when two armed men walked in and opened fire, coolly finishing off their victims with shots at point-blank range, they said.

At least 50 killed on French roads Jan. 1

PARIS (AFP) — At least 50 people were killed on French roads on New Year's Day, France's road safety information service CNIR said on Saturday. Most of the victims were under the age of 25, it said, describing the toll as "particularly alarming." According to CNIR figures, around 20 people were killed on the roads on January 1 in 1997 and 1998.



Some 10,000 people stand together to form the sign of the Euro outside the seat of the European Central Bank in Frankfurt on Friday following the idea of the banks in Frankfurt and a local radio station to celebrate the birth of the European single currency (AFP)

Thousands work overtime to prepare for euro's trading debut

PARIS (AFP) — Tens of thousands of dealers and computer programmers across Europe were hard at work over the weekend preparing for the euro single currency's trading debut on Monday.

Some 10,000 operators, analysts, technicians and programmers worked overtime in Paris and another 30,000 in London, even though Britain is one of four of the 15 EU countries left out of the euro launch.

The City of London financial district, home to 500 foreign banks, was caught up in the fever of activity, ironing out the wrinkles after euro conversion rates were set Thursday and keyed into the national monies.

At the Paris Stock

Exchange on Saturday, some 8,500 share orders were placed in euros by midday. The bourse was officially closed, but the trading system received advance orders that

larly for payment systems. It is possible that we shall have problems on Monday, that later in the week we will find some failed trades, some payments that were sent to the wrong banks, what we call misdirected payments, everybody is alert for that," deputy governor of the Bank of England, David Clementi, said.

Euro coins and banknotes will only be issued in January 2002, but cheques can already be written in euros and from Monday stock markets will quote prices in euros rather than national currencies.

The euro made a quiet trading debut in far-away Bombay on Friday, where the stock exchange was one of

the only forex markets open on Jan. 1, but no significant deals were made because most corporate houses were closed for the day.

The euro opened at its EU

set rate of \$1.16675 and strengthened to 1.1733 before closing at 1.1720.

Most European banks and stock markets said preparations for Monday were on track and did not foresee any major problems. But they stressed that they do not expect Monday to be trouble-free.

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Iraq steps up war of words against Egypt

SABGHAD (R) — Iraq on Saturday stepped up its war of words against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak following differences between the two Arab nations over last month's U.S. and British air strikes on Iraqi targets.

The Iraqi press and officials have blamed Egypt for the postponement of an Arab summit to deal with the U.S.-led attacks.

Cairo, for its part, has accused Iraqi President Saddam Hussein of provoking the four-day U.S.-led military campaign which ended on Dec. 20.

The 22-member, Cairo-based Arab League has postponed until Jan. 24 a meeting of Arab foreign minister which had been expected to prepare for the proposed summit to discuss

the air strikes.

The newspaper Babel, owned by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday, urged Egyptians to topple Mubarak.

"Egyptians who cannot accept such behaviour... would reject their shameless ruler who has lost everything, including his self-respect," it said.

The paper also published a cartoon depicting Mubarak as obeying orders from Saudi and Kuwaiti rulers and U.S. officials.

The cartoon showed Mubarak dancing in female costume as the rulers of Kuwait stand around him, beating drums and playing music. U.S. President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu were shown

looking on and clapping.

The official daily newspaper Al Iraq accused Mubarak of collaborating with Saudi rulers to put off the proposed Arab summit.

"In order to follow up American hostile policy against Iraq, Mubarak collaborated with Saudi rulers to prevent the Arab meeting," it said.

Mubarak has been the target of harsh criticism in the Baghdad press since Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz wrote an editorial in one paper criticising him for being unreasonable in blaming Baghdad rather than Washington for the air strikes.

Egypt spearheaded Arab opposition to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and contributed troops to the U.S.-led multinational

force which drove the Iraqis out seven months later.

Iraq severed ties with Egyptian and many other countries which took part in that multinational force.

But economic ties between the two Arab countries have improved since 1996 when Baghdad agreed to the oil-for-food deal with the United Nations which allows Iraq to sell limited quantities of oil to buy food and medicine.

Egypt sent a senior diplomat to Baghdad in 1993 to improve services for about 70,000 Egyptians then living in Iraq.

Last year, Egypt opened a large trade centre in Baghdad and several Egyptian ministers have visited Baghdad to conclude deals under its oil pact with the U.N.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Sudan, U.S. in secret contacts'

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail has revealed that "intensive secret" contacts are under way between Khartoum and Washington towards the restoration of relations. Ismail was quoted by Al Rai al Aam daily on Saturday as saying that the contacts stemmed from a directive by U.S. President Bill Clinton to the State Department to open a serious and constructive dialogue with Sudan. Although Khartoum has lodged a complaint with the U.N. Security Council against Washington over the U.S. bombing of a pharmaceutical plant last August, Sudan "has never thought of closing the door to dialogue with Washington," Ismail said.

Sudan opposition stages protest

KHARTOUM (AFP) — The outlawed Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) observed Independence Day on Friday by staging a major anti-government demonstration, witnesses said. The demonstrators marched across Omdurman, Khartoum's twin city, while police followed closely without intervening, the witnesses said. Chanting slogans against the government and legislation on party formation that took effect Friday, the demonstrators set out from the house of the late Ismail Al Azhari, independence leader and DUP founder, and marched to his grave for a spirited rally.

Egypt detains 43 militants

CAIRO (R) — Prosecutors have detained for questioning 43 men suspected of belonging to Egypt's largest Islamist group, security sources said on Saturday. The detainees, arrested last month, will be held for 15 days on suspicion of trying to revive Al Gama'a Al Islamiya (Islamic Group) and planning to kill public figures and blow up important sites, security sources said. They said that the men had formed Gama'a cells and that documents were seized proving their membership in the group.

Germany calls on Turkey to reduce military on Cyprus

BONN (AP) — Germany welcomed on Wednesday the Greek Cypriot president's decision not to deploy missiles on the divided island, and called on Turkey to reduce its military presence there in response. Foreign Ministry spokesman Martin Erdmann said such a move by Turkey would contribute to building trust in Cyprus. Germany, which assumes the rotating European Union presidency on Friday, would like to help find a "just and lasting solution" for the Cyprus problem, Erdmann said. Turkey had threatened military action if the Russian-made missiles were actually deployed.

22 killed in Algeria

ALGIERS (AP) — Armed men massacred a family of 22 early Saturday in a rural area some 400 kilometres southwest of Algiers, authorities said.

Security forces mounted "a vast search operation" for the killers, a statement said, and Health Minister Yahia Guidoum travelled to the massacre site, near Al Bayadh, on a plateau where numerous families — like the victims — cultivate sheep and other livestock.

Details of the pre-dawn massacre were not immediately available. Residents of Al Bayadh contacted by telephone said the killings were the work of the radical Armed Islamic Group, blamed by authorities for the violence that has torn Algeria for seven years.

According to the residents, the armed band was carrying out a vengeance massacre because members of the family were reportedly close to security forces. That information could not be immediately confirmed. Islamic insurgents have

been known in the past to punish with death families whose members join self-defence forces set up by the government.

The massacre raised the death toll to more than 70 since Dec. 19, the start of Ramadan.

The Muslim holy month has, for the past seven years, seen increased activity by Islamic insurgents trying to topple Algeria's military-backed government.

Several privately-owned newspapers reported Saturday the killing of at least a dozen members of Algeria's security forces in two ambushes earlier in the week and the death of a Muslim extremist "emir" in a third ambush.

There was no immediate official confirmation of the reports.

According to Le Quotidien d'Oran, nine soldiers were machine gunned to death on Thursday after the two jeeps they were riding in hit mines.

Cairo pets get state-of-the-art hospital and motel

By Hala Boncompagni
AFP

CAIRO — Egypt's first animal motel, state-of-the-art hospital and a super mini-market offering canine toothpaste and diet food for pets has opened for business at a cost of about one million dollars.

Located in the upmarket Cairo neighbourhood of Mohandisseen, the private Cairo Vet Centre boasts a modern polyclinic and laboratory and a mini-market selling 400 items of food, including diet

meals, animal toys, anti-flea shampoos and other useful goods for man's four-legged and feathered friends.

Already 15 dogs have checked in at the 25-cell motel on the southern fringes of Mohandisseen which opened last month. But it's also open to horses, cats and other domestic animals, who can choose between a single or suite — the latter usually designed for expecting or newly-wed pets.

Multi-coloured light-bulbs and posters of cats and dogs

were strung outside the building housing the ground-floor clinic, off the fashionable Gameat Al Dowal Avenue in Mohandisseen, for its inauguration in mid-December.

Guests were invited to come without their pets to celebrate the event which culminated with the slaughtering of a calf in the street outside the building, in a traditional gesture of goodwill with the meat going to the poor.

"Unfortunately no one in the Middle East is interested in developing the veterinary field.

This line of work is considered of little importance," said veterinarian Ahmad Al Shebiny, owner of the venture.

Shebiny, a fellow at the Animal Health Trust Hospital in the English town of Newmarket, enlisted the help of three Egyptian veterinary surgeons who had established practices abroad because of the lack of interest at home.

Safwat Al Mokhtar Al Hassan said he will shuttle between Cairo and Karlsruhe in Germany where he runs an animal clinic. "There are 10

veterinarians in Cairo but none have the equipment we have here," Hassan told visitors.

The consultation room is equipped with an ultrasound machine, an ophthalmoscope, a laryngoscope and a portable X-ray for house calls. While the surgery room has an ultraviolet lamp, used for sterilisation, and the latest tools used in bone and open heart surgery.

"We can perform all sorts of surgery from cataracts to neurosurgery," said Hassan. According to Shebiny, five per cent of Cairo's 16 million

inhabitants own pets or other domestic animals and the cleric hopes that it will be able to reach a large number of them.

So far the first clients are expatriates and wealthy Egyptians who have no qualms on spending from three to five dollars a day for a motel room — full board of course — for their pets.

The cost of simple surgery will be around \$200 and nearly \$300 for more serious operations, or up to three times the average monthly salary of an Egyptian office worker.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 ...Cartoon — The Pink Panther
15:20 ...The Pumpkin Patch
15:30 ...Lift Off
16:00 ...Doc — Big Cat Diary
16:30 ...[Ch. 2 Links with Ch. 1]
17:00 ...Le Grand Secret
18:15 ...Omar Ben Abdul Aziz
19:00 ...Le Journal
19:15 ...Words of Wisdom
19:30 ...News Headlines
19:35 ...Comedy — The Britas Empire
20:00 ...Journey Across the Land of Islam
20:30 ...Drama — Walker, Texas Ranger
21:15 ...Doc — Faring & Ecology
21:30 ...Entertainment — Behind the Scenes
22:00 ...News in English
22:30 ...Melissa
23:10 ...Drama — Doogie Howser
23:59 ...End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:54 ...Fajr
05:09 ...[Sunrise] Duha
11:40 ...Dhuhr
14:25 ...'Asr
16:48 ...Maghreb
18:11 ...Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swieifieh, Tel. 5930740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004
Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

Electric Power Co. 463681
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Int'l. Airport 44-53200

(02)272275

IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'amneh (02)250080

Ibn Al Nafis Hospital (02)7101372, (02)7103101

Fou'ad Pharmacy 02/275360

Rosary Sisters Hospital (02)7102831, (02)7102011

ZARQA:
Dr. Akram Haddad (09)1985550
Palestine Pharmacy (09)983562

Speciality Hospital (02)7103100

EMERGENCIES

AHMAM:

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Ajloun 04/12
Jerash 05/16
Um Qays 05/16
Madaba 06/17
Petra 04/17
Dead Sea 13/25

Armenian, English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 461490
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331
The American Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 4787111

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)00560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)90990

Al Amal Cancer Centre 5535000

Overseas Calls 0132

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101

Jordan Television 4773111

Radio Jordan 4774111

Water Authority 5680100

J. Electricity Authority 5815615

Firas Pharmacy 5661912

AMMAN:

Dr. Ghaleb Zawadah 4126011

Dr. Khalid Asfour 5332600

Dr. Awn Hawadeth 5332350

Dr. Tawfiq Qubais 4623029

Jordan Television 4773111

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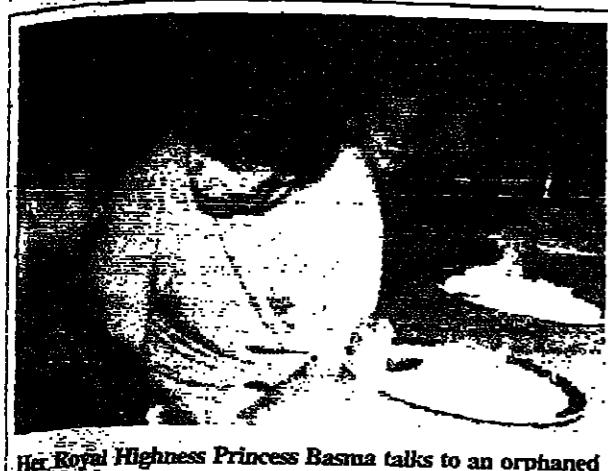
J. Electricity Authority 5815615

Firas Pharmacy 5661912

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Dr. Ghaleb Zawadah 4126011

Dr. Khalid Asfour 5332600



Her Royal Highness Princess Basma talks to an orphaned child from a village near Irbid where she had an iftar after distributing food and clothes to needy families the company of 400 children.

Princess Basma takes Ramadan Charity Campaign on the road

AMMAN (J.T.) — As part of the ongoing Ramadan Charity Campaign to aid the poor, Her Royal Highness Princess Basma toured villages and towns in the Irbid, Jerash and Ajloun governorates where she met the needy and distributed financial and in-kind aid to hundreds of poor families.

The beneficiaries, including residents of refugee camps and 15 villages, received aid worth JD55,000 along with medicine and medical equipment worth another JD25,000.

The Princess's first stop was in the Jerash region where she was accorded an enthusiastic welcome by local citizens and schoolchildren to whom she distributed gifts.

Princess Basma is continuing the campaign to collect contributions and distribute them to needy families, mainly in Jordan's remote villages.

Five hundred families from the refugee camp, 350 from the villages of the Ajloun governorate and another 350 in the Jerash area received gifts and medicine during Princess Basma's tour.

The financial and in-kind contributions were donated by economic institutions, banks, private organisations, companies, factories and private citizens.

Aqaba church find 'pure serendipity'

By Joe Wheeler
The Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — It was an astonishing piece of luck. After a lunch, Professor Thomas Parker went looking for an ancient Roman trading port and dug up what may be the oldest known Christian church.

Other structures converted to churches are older than the two-story mud-brick building that Parker found in Aqaba, Jordan, a Red Sea resort city 210 miles south of Amman. Parker's discovery, however, is the oldest building known to exist that was erected solely as a Christian worshiping place, he said.

Built around 290 or 300 A.D. by early Christians, the church somehow survived the "Great Persecution," when the Roman Emperor Diocletian ordered churches razed and Christians tortured between 303 and 311.

The church may have been spared because it lay on the empire's southeastern periphery, Parker said.

It was destroyed by a catastrophic earthquake in 363 and buried in the desert.

Parker, 48, on the North Carolina State University history faculty since 1980, became interested in Aqaba and its predecessor, the ancient Roman port of

Aila when he shifted his scholarly research from Roman military history to Roman economy. He found himself in the middle of a debate about how big a role trade played.

"We didn't go to Aqaba to find the oldest church in the world, but to find evidence of Roman economic activity," he said. "The discovery of the church was an unexpected bonus."

Ancient historical texts suggested Aila's likely location in present-day Aqaba, which lies at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba, an arm of the Red Sea. Parker and his wife walked the area in 1993 after examining old British Royal Air Force aerial photos. They found pottery shards that encouraged them to return in 1994.

That year, he and his 50-member expedition found Aila in the middle of a thriving port city that was undergoing a construction boom.

"It was serendipity that we started when we did," Parker said of the expedition's timing. "We could have lost a major historic site."

Only when his crew last summer excavated the apse on the eastern end of the building did he become confident enough to consider announcing his finding.

Lower House committee to open discussion on Abbadi's immunity

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Legal Committee of the Lower House of Parliament is scheduled to start discussions tomorrow of a request from the criminal Court's prosecutor general to lift the parliamentary immunity of Deputy Ahmad Oweidi Abbadi to allow him to stand trial in two court cases connected with alleged sexual assault.

The committee, chaired by Deputy Ghaleb Zou'bi, announced it received the request and the necessary documents, channelled to it through the House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali.

According to parliamentary regulations, cases concerning immunity of deputies are referred to the Legal Committee for review. The committee issues its recommendations to the House within a period of two weeks.

Abbadi has denied the allegations levelled against him and the husband of the woman who filed one of the sexual assault cases against

the deputy has dropped charges. But according to the Legal Committee, the husband's decision to drop charges does not mean that the case is dropped in the Lower House.

Informed sources told the Jordan Times that the woman who filed the case claimed that she had an affair with Abbadi who promised to marry her.

According to the Jordanian Constitution, senators and deputies shall not be subject to court prosecution while Parliament is in session unless an absolute majority of the Lower House finds enough evidence to allow prosecution.

Since the restoration of parliamentary life in 1989, the House has never lifted the immunity of any deputy and has since turned down two similar requests involving former deputies Yaqoub Qirish and Jamal Khereisha.

Party leaders blast Arab governments for a 'lack of courage'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Leaders of political parties, prominent Jordanian politicians and women groups on Friday voiced condemnation of the British-U.S. strikes against Iraq and called on the Arab and Islamic nations to take the initiative of ending the sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people.

Among the main speakers at a public rally held at Khalil Al Rahman Society was the Muslim Brotherhood's overall leader Abdul Majid Thuneibat, who accused Arab regimes of lacking courage and political potency, saying leaders even were afraid to hold a summit to discuss the Iraqi question.

Mjallal accused successive governments of trying to sever Jordan from the Arab World and of subjecting the country to the will of the enemies of the Arab Nation.

Mjallal urged Arabs to call for a summit which should be totally dedicated to the lifting of sanctions and urged Syria and Iraq to unite their efforts in the face of the common Iraqi question.

Praising the support for Iraq expressed by Arab parliamentarians during a recent extraordinary meeting in Amman to discuss the recent U.S.-British aggression on Iraq, Thuneibat said the parliamentarians should force their governments to lift the sanctions, stressing that Arab countries can and should take this initiative to save the Iraqi people from further aggression.

Na'l Barakat, head of the Higher Committee for Coordination among Opposition Parties, said hostile powers have imposed their hegemony over Arab oil resources and have forced Gulf countries to accept and support enemy troops stationed on their soil under the pretext of defending Arab states.

Laila Khaled, a leading Palestinian political activist, said the mere words of condemnation are futile and cannot achieve anything.

Arab women in Iraq have lost one million of their children during the embargo and are steadfast in their stand, Khaled said. She urged Arab states to rally behind Iraq's struggle for freedom from aggression and Western hegemony.

Over the past decades, the government allowed land owners to pump water from wells for agricultural and domestic use in areas that have no direct supplies. Each well has an average of pumping capacity of 50-100 cubic metres per hour.

According to law, owners are required to install meters at all licensed wells to allow the Water Authority to take readings to ensure that the annual quota of 50,000 cubic metres of water each is not surpassed. Violators are required to pay 250 fils per each cubic metre above the set amount.

The government estimates that more than 50 per cent of water circulates to citizens was lost annually to both a worn out water network and illegal water usage.

The government has stopped supplying these households with water after violations were discovered and they will be charged by the prosecutor general in accordance with the volume of illegally received water.

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Political fight shapes up in Indonesia

JAKARTA (AFP) — A political fight was looming here Saturday over the likely disqualification of scores of new political parties from taking part in the first general elections since the fall of Suharto.

The wrangle was triggered by a statement by Home Affairs Minister Syarwan Hamid last week that only 15 of some 120 parties that have sprung up since Suharto's fall would qualify for the June 7 polls under new laws being drawn up by parliament.

Indonesian President BJ. Habibie, a former Suharto protégé, in a New Year's Eve address pledged he would do all he could to ensure the elections would be free and fair, and urged Indonesians to see them as the door to a new beginning.

But a university student senate in Central Java warned in an announcement published by the Indonesian Observer Saturday that if it saw the new rules as unfair or "benefiting the status quo" it could boycott the polls.

The Diponegoro University senate also said it would welcome any political parties unhappy with the rules to join the boycott.

Student groups in Jakarta, who have been at the forefront of the reform battle with massive street demonstrations, told AFP they were awaiting the publication of the parliamentary rules before taking action.

"It is becoming clear that the (Jakarta student) groups will be divided between those who are for the elections, and those against," said one student leader from Fokot, the students' City Forum grouping some 30 universities in the greater Jakarta area.

Meanwhile respected moderate Muslim scholar, Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid, lashed out at any boycott plan, and called a separate move mooted last week by the smaller parties to hold their own election as "unconstitutional."

California gas worker arrested as bomb suspect

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP) — A gas repairman who works for the regional utility company was arrested here after he was found in possession of material to build a bomb, city police reported.

Paul Madronich, who fixes gas leaks for Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), was found hoarding some 113 kilos of ammonium nitrate and explosive wiring and fuses at a San Francisco metering service centre.

Ammonium nitrate, a fertiliser that becomes a deadly explosive when mixed with fuel, is the chemical used in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 people.

Madronich, 44, also had bomb-making manuals and a 125 litre drum of calcium nitrate, another fertiliser used in explosives, San Francisco police said.

Madronich was arrested Thursday and is being held on \$1-million bail, police reported late Friday. Although it is

"If there is a rival election, it is clearly unconstitutional," said Gus Dur, who has been shuttling between the armed forces, the president, the students and leading reformists in an attempt to shore up national unity at a time of waning confidence in the government.

The current government, Gus Dur said, was "in a mess," but the best way out was through elections "organised by a fair and just committee" with the Habibie government acting only as a facilitator.

Should only 15 parties meet a government proposal now before parliament for representation in one third of the country's 27 provinces, more than 100 of the new parties that have mushroomed since Suharto's fall on May 21 would be out of the running.

Some critics of the government proposals have counter-proposed that all 120 be allowed to run in June 1999 to serve as a weeding-out process for the next five-yearly elections in 2005.

But the only parties represented in parliament are the three allowed under Suharto's rule — the ruling Golkar party, the Muslim-oriented United Development Party (PPP) and the smaller Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI).

The current leading presidential hopefuls are Habibie, Megawati Sukarnoputri, popular daughter of the country's founding president Sukarno, and Muslim intellectual Amien Rais.

Megawati was kicked out of the PDI leadership when the Suharto government rigged a PDI conference in 1996, a move that was greeted by widespread rioting in Jakarta.

The Golkar-majority parliament is currently deadlocked over whether civil servants should be allowed to hold party posts, a practice which helped Golkar sweep every poll since the early 1970s.



A destroyed car sits in the parking lot of the Waterfront in Cape Town. Police said two people were injured in the car bomb explosion at the entertainment area where two people were killed in a pipe bomb blast last August. Police said it was too early to speculate on who was behind the car bomb at the height of the summer tourist season (Reuters photo)

Police hunt for clues after Cape Town car bomb

CAPE TOWN (R) — Police were hunting for clues Saturday to the identity of attackers who injured three people with a car bomb in Cape Town's Waterfront, tourist mecca.

The New Year's Day blast was the second in four months at the hugely popular complex, which was crammed with holidaymakers at the height of the southern hemisphere's summer.

Police said they were studying video and security camera footage of the area but had no clues to the size of the bomb or the motive for planting it in a location with no clear target.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

A forensic expert from Pretoria was due in Cape Town later Saturday to assess the explosive and the device and to see if it

matched bombs used in urban terror attacks in recent months in the Cape Flats area east of Cape Town.

Police spokeswoman Anne de Beer said the Toyota Corolla which carried the bomb had been stolen two days earlier just north of the city.

Three people were treated for minor injuries and released from hospital after the Friday evening explosion. Two others were treated for shock.

The wreckage of the gutted white Corolla and of other cars around it provided an unusual attraction Saturday as shoppers and holidaymakers arrived at the Waterfront.

In August a powerful pipe bomb ripped through the U.S.-franchised Planet Hollywood restaurant, killing two people and injuring more than 25.

That attack was widely attributed to the work of Muslim extremists angry at U.S. missile attacks on targets in Afghanistan and Sudan.

There was immediate speculation that the New Year's Day car blast might also have been the work of militants in retaliation for the air strikes by British and U.S. warplanes against Iraq.

The explosion followed the bombing of a synagogue on Dec. 18. British Prime Minister Tony Blair is to visit the city next week.

But Western Cape Province Premier Gerald Morkel, facing national elections in under six months, moved quickly to offer a possible alternative explanation.

"We can't run and hide. These people are cowards. We will come again," said breakfasting Brian Simpson from Durban.

Police have said the Planet Hollywood bomb was similar to other blasts connected with gang warfare in the region.

For tourist Kate Crawford

there was no chance of the attack ruining her New Year holiday. "I come from Northern Ireland. I am used to this," she said.

Congolese rebels admit loss of town

KISANGANI, Congo (AP) — Congolese rebels have admitted they lost a northwestern town to forces loyal to President Laurent Kabila, blaming lack of men and dense forests for slowing the advance.

Maj. Satiilo Ngizo, speaking at rebel headquarters in Kisangani, Congo's third largest city and the last navigable port up the Congo River, said Friday that government troops, aided by Rwandan Hutu fighters, had captured Businga after a day of heavy air bombardment last week.

He said Businga, about 1,200 kilometres northeast of the capital, Kinshasa, fell because most of the rebel troops were engaged in capturing Gomena and its airbase, 200 kilometres to the west, and left the town unprotected.

Ngizo said the rebels were attempting to retake Businga.

The Congolese rebels and their Rwandan and Ugandan backers are attempting to secure positions in northwestern Equateur Province, home territory of former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, in their advance on Kinshasa.

Shortly after the rebellion

began Aug. 2, rebels won power in July 1994, and most of the Hutu fighters fled to the former Zaire.

Rwanda and Uganda say they will keep troops in Congo until they have neutralised bases in eastern Congo used by Rwandan and Ugandan rebels attempting to destabilise their governments.

Rwanda accuses Kabila of enlisting thousands of former Rwandan Hutu soldiers and militiamen, responsible for a 1994 genocide in Rwanda of more than 500,000 people.

The Tutsi-led rebels won power in July 1994, and most of the Hutu fighters fled to the former Zaire.

Wednesday, Zimbabwe announced that forces loyal to Kabila had captured Businga and Fizi on the shores of Lake Tanganyika on Congo's eastern border.

But Ngizo denied Fizi had fallen, saying the town was in the middle of the rebel-held territory.

However, New Vision, the Ugandan government-owned daily, reported Friday that Fizi had fallen to local Mai-Mai warriors, a loose grouping of eastern tribes hostile to Rwandan and Ugandan involvement in Congo and sometimes allied with Kabila.

There was no independent confirmation of either report.

Meanwhile, Ngizo said rebels controlled Pweto on Lake Mweru on Congo's southeastern border with Zambia, from where they were pushing southwest in the direction of Lubumbashi, the capital of copper-rich Katanga Province and Kabila's home turf.

Japan's emperor leads New Year celebrations

TOKYO (AFP) — Emperor Akihito led Japan's New Year celebrations in a rare public appearance Saturday, underlining the imperial family's undying influence over the economic power dogged by its worst post-war recession.

Millions of people also flocked to temples and shrines, in a traditional pilgrimage during the country's most festive period, to pray for prosperity and good health.

"It is my sincere pleasure to greet and celebrate the New Year together," the 65-year-old monarch told thousands of well-wishers from behind bullet-proof glass on a balcony at the Imperial Palace.

"On the occasion of the start of the New Year, I pray for the happiness of the people in our country and in the world," said Akihito, who has reigned for 10 years since the death of his father, emperor Hirohito.

The festivities left three elderly people dead in Tokyo Friday and Saturday when they choked while eating

sticky rice cake, a New Year delicacy, medical officials said. Six others were taken to hospital with the same problem.

In a New Year message released Friday, Akihito reflected on Japan's worst postwar recession as well as floods and other natural disasters which have dogged the nation in the past year.

"What is weighing heavily on my mind is the growing difficulty in the people's livelihood due to developments in the economic situation and the occurrence of natural disasters," he said.

"Under such conditions, I feel it is becoming more and more important for further cooperation, transcending national boundaries, in various fields such as the world economy and the global environment," he added.

Speeches by the emperor must be devoid of any political significance after the imperial family were restricted

to purely ceremonial duties after World War II when Hirohito renounced his status as commander-in-chief and a demigod.

There is a busy year ahead for Akihito, who vowed not to cut back his official duties when he marked his 65th birthday on December 23.

He will attend ceremonies marking the 10th anniversary of Hirohito's death on January 7. The imperial couple will also celebrate the 40th anniversary of their marriage.

He has also been invited to visit Seoul in 2000, before the two neighbouring nations co-host the football World Cup 2002, to put their bitter past behind them.

But the Tokyo government reportedly remains cautious about such an unprecedented visit amid lingering public resentment in South Korea against Japan's colonial rule over the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Princess Anne busiest of British royals

LONDON (R) — Princess Anne was the busiest member of Britain's Royal Family in 1998 and clocked up the most official engagements, a survey showed on Saturday. Queen Elizabeth had a more active year in 1998 — her number of official engagements dropped by nearly a fifth. The London Times survey, compiled by Tim O'Donovan, showed the queen's daughter to be top of the "busy-leader" in 1998 with 679 engagements. "She is a jolly hard worker. She tears around all over the place," O'Donovan said. "But the work rate of the whole royal family remains remarkably high, considering that more than half of its adult members are now over the age at which many people retire."

26 injured in fire in Austria

VIENNA (AFP) — Twenty six people, including four children, were taken to hospital suffering from smoke inhalation after a fire overnight in the basement of a block of flats in Wels, in central Austria, police said Saturday. It was not immediately known what started the fire, which filled the four-storey building with smoke. Fire fighters pumped air into the stairwells, enabling nine people to make their own way out. Another 17 were evacuated via ladders.

Bomb explodes in Indonesian department store, no injuries

JAKARTA (AP) — A bomb exploded early Saturday in an empty department store in Indonesia's capital city, destroying goods, shattering windows and damaging a van in front of the building. There were no injuries in the 5 a.m. blast at the Ramayana store in downtown Jakarta, police said. They did not speculate on a motive. Officers found and deactivated two other bombs at the site, which is less than a kilometre from the presidential palace. According to police statistics, armed robberies and other crimes rose 10 per cent in 1997 as millions of people lost their jobs in Indonesia's worst economic crisis in decades. Political tension remains high following the ouster in May of former authoritarian President Suharto after riots and protests. Authorities are concerned about security as rival political forces jostle for influence ahead of parliamentary elections next June.

Swiss tourist missing on Indonesian hiking trip

JAKARTA (AP) — Authorities have launched a search for a Swiss tourist believed missing on a lone hiking trip up a volcano on Indonesia's Sumatra island, a press report said Saturday. Marc Affaré had set off alone on Dec. 15 to climb the 3,805-metre Kerinci Mountain in the Kerinci Seblat National Park, despite a temporary ban on climbing the mountain following vulcanologists reports that the volcano was active. He had been scheduled to return Thursday, according to staff at the hostel where he had stayed, the Antara state news agency said. Dwi Sutanto, an official from the park, said Affaré's flashlight had been found at a height of 2,700 metres. "We hope to be able to give a report in the next three days," Sutanto was quoted by Antara as saying. Landslides and heavy rains have also been reported from the area of the park in the past week.

Thirty-three Brazilian prisoners on the run

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) — Forty-three prisoners broke out of a Rio prison early Friday but 10 were later recaptured as they travelled north on a bus, police sources said. A preliminary investigation was focusing on the role of the prison guards in allowing the inmates to flee with their weapons. The prison, Todos os Santos, has a maximum capacity of 60 but currently houses 173 prisoners.

Fishing boat with six crewmen still missing in northern Russian lake

MOSCOW (AP) — A fishing boat with six crew aboard was missing Saturday on Russia's northern Lake Lagoda, a news report said. Search crews, using a helicopter and boats, have hunted for the fishing vessel since it vanished Dec. 31 on the massive lake, according to the ITAR-TASS news agency. The boat was believed to have disappeared off the lake's north-western coast, but no trace of it has been found. ITAR-TASS said Lake Lagoda is located near Russia's second largest city, St. Petersburg.

Quake rattles eastern Taiwan

TAIPEI (AP) — An earthquake measuring 4.1 on the Richter scale rocked eastern Taiwan Saturday, but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties, seismologists said. The tremor struck at 5:15 p.m. (0915 GMT), with its epicentre located 32.2 kilometres northeast of Hualien in eastern Taiwan. It originated 11.4 kilometres under the earth's surface. Another quake of the same intensity hit eastern Taiwan Thursday. Taiwan sits on an earthquake belt but most quakes are centred deep below the surface, tending on their destructive strength. A quake measuring at 6.2 on the Richter scale hit southern Chiayi county in July killing five people and injuring 26. Seismologists have warned southern Taiwan could be in for a potentially devastating tremor following a relatively calm 30-year activity cycle. In 1964, a quake in Paitou in southern Taiwan claimed 106 lives and injured 650 people.

Two dead in Canadian retirement home fire

HALIFAX, Canada (AFP) — Two people died when a blaze swept through a retirement home during a New Year's Eve celebration, firefighters said Friday. Fire spokesman Tom Silver said that 24 people suffered from smoke inhalation and were taken to hospital. None appeared to have life-threatening injuries. The fire erupted shortly before 8 p.m. (0100 GMT Friday) on the second floor of the building that is home to about 300 people, he said.



The Thai Airways International PCL float, which is named 'The Kingdom of Thailand', is shown during the 110th Annual Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena; 106 floats took part in the parade (Reuters photo)

Chinese dissidents say opposition party would monitor ruling Communists

BEIJING (AP) — Dissidents planning to form an independent labour party in China said Saturday that their group would simply monitor the ruling Communist Party instead of seeking its ouster from power.

Organisers of the China Labour Party said the group would expel any members who obtained government positions, according to a statement received by foreign news agencies in Beijing.

"Our party's responsibility will be to monitor the Chinese Communist Party and represent the working class. We want to see if we, who have declared we will never seek political power... will also be contaminated with the charge of 'subverting state power,'" the statement said.

Plans for the party have emerged several weeks into a crackdown on dissent that has resulted in lengthy prison terms for leaders of a would-be opposition group called the China Democracy Party, who were accused of attempting to subvert state power.

Organisers of the new China Labour Party said they planned to register their group with the Civil Affairs Ministry in Beijing on April 19.

"If the authorities refuse to treat our application in a lawful manner, I will radically commit suicide in order to express my desperate anger and protest," read the statement signed by a dissident named Li Yongming.

Chinese law requires all organisations to be registered with the government, although applications by dissidents are usually rejected.

Attempts to register the China Democracy Party in many provinces and cities failed, and dozens of those associated with the group have been detained in the government's harshest clampdown on dissent in three years.

The China Labour Party statement said the group would lobby the government to re-register all bank accounts in order to root out illegal accounts used to embezzle public money.

It also said the government should halt state-owned enterprise reforms while it sets up a mechanism for public oversight of the restructuring process.

For the sake of the urban poor, many of whom have lost their jobs due to government economic reforms, it demanded that the government provide a minimum living allowance and ensure enough income for food, housing and medical treatment.

Extremely wary of any movement combining political opposition and labour activism amid fears of unrest among the growing number of unemployed, Communist Party leaders have vowed to quash challenges to party rule.

The crackdown precedes several major political milestones this year, including the 10th anniversary of the military assault on protesters in Tiananmen Square and the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Communist-led government.

The China Development Union also urged the government to establish a free electoral system, to compensate the families of people killed or injured during the suppression of the Tiananmen protest and to give greater autonomy to Tibet, the Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said in a statement.

Last month, Xu Wenli, a veteran activist, was sentenced to 13 years in prison.

Two other influential figures in the China Democracy Party, Qin Yongmin and Wang Youcui, were sentenced in separate trials to 12 years and 11 years. All three were charged with the same crime: inciting the subversion of state power.

Despite the crackdown, members of the China Democracy Party and another dissident group, the China Development Union, have issued New Year statements calling for political reforms, the release of political prisoners and recognition of opposition political groups, a Hong Kong-based human rights group said Saturday.

The China Development Union also urged the government to establish a free electoral system, to compensate the families of people killed or injured during the suppression of the Tiananmen protest and to give greater autonomy to Tibet, the Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said in a statement.

The three deputies — Kazi Khalid, Zulfikar Haider and Liaquat Qureshi — have been

U.N. looking into report of Angola plane survivors

LUANDA (R) — The United Nations mission in Angola said Saturday it was investigating reports that survivors from a crashed U.N. plane were in the hands of rebels.

Angolan state radio said the rebel National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) was holding the survivors at a base near the central city of Huambo.

Hamadou Toure, spokesman for the U.N. Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA) told Reuters: "We are investigating. It is not con-

firmed yet from our side." He said the fighting and the jungle terrain made it difficult to gather information.

UNITA officials were not immediately available to confirm whether the group was holding any survivors.

The chartered transport plane went down a week ago in dense jungle near Vila Nova, 25 km from Huambo, where UNITA rebels have government forces under siege.

Fierce fighting around Huambo, Angola's second

largest city, and in other areas has shattered Angola's 1994 peace accord and pointed to a resumption of the civil war, which started at independence from Portugal in 1975.

Angolan army spokesman Brigadier Jose Manuel Jota told state radio he had information the survivors "are under (UNITA leader) Jonas Savimbi's custody somewhere in the Andulo or Baulundo areas".

He did not know how many of 10 passengers and four crew of the C130 Hercules

had survived the crash.

Thursday, the U.N. Security Council demanded that the Angolan government and UNITA help in the search for the South African-owned plane.

The government has said it is willing to help but UNITA said it had received no request from the wreckage.

The wreckage has been spotted by high-altitude aircraft but no one has been allowed near the site in an area presumed to be under UNITA control.

Nine dead, 25 hurt in Quebec avalanche

KANGIQUAULUJUJUAQ, Quebec (AP) — A wall of snow crashed down on a New Year's celebration in a remote Inuit village in northern Quebec, killing nine people, including five children, and injuring 25 when it broke through a school gymnasium wall, police said.

Six people died shortly after Friday's avalanche in the coastal village of Kangiqualujuaq, in an Inuit region 1,500 kilometres northeast of Montreal.

Twenty-five people were injured, 10 of them seriously.

The exact cause of the avalanche was still being debated early Saturday. Speculation centered on a ceremonial gun salute about 90 minutes before the avalanche that might have loosened snow on a nearby hill.

Before the last body was recovered, local residents had dug frantically through snow that slid down the 75-metre hill and punched through the wall of the school gym, Harvey said. The force of the avalanche crushed pickup trucks and snowmobiles.

Residents faced a fierce snowstorm, 95 kph wind and minus 20 Celsius temperatures looking for those buried under snow up to 3 metres deep.

Billy May, a heavy-equipment operator, was among those who helped retrieve the bodies.

"People were looking for their kids, their husbands, wives and parents," Leduc said. "They began to cry and scream."

"There were a few seconds of panic... after that people started to get a grip on themselves and found tools right there to try to pull bodies out of the snow. A lot

were alive because the snow was very fresh and, as time went on, some were not alive."

Police said they had accounted for everyone and called off the search. Five of the victims were under the age of eight and four were adults, police said.

The toll could have been much worse — between 400 and 500 people were packed into the gym when the avalanche struck shortly before 2 a.m. Friday.

Three other victims — a mother, her young daughter and son — were discovered several hours later buried under tonnes of snow, said Luc Harvey, chief of the Kativik regional police force in Kangiqualujuaq, 300 kilometres west of the village.

"It was like an explosion," school principal Jean Leduc said. "You heard an immense crack and the wall was flying into pieces and, the next thing you knew, the gym was entirely covered in snow."

Emudluk remembers she

looked at her watch at about 1:25 a.m. and that the avalanche started about 20 minutes later.

"It sounded like thunder, but only for a few seconds," a shaken Emudluk told a news conference.

"I gave someone my shovel.

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Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily, published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975

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E-mail: jotimes@go.com.jo

Web Site: <http://www.access2arabia.com/jordantimes/>

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department

New year, renewed hopes

THE YEAR 1999 promises to be an eventful one. On the national scene, His Majesty King Hussein will return to the country, God willing, completely recovered after more than six months of treatment in the U.S. All Jordanians are waiting impatiently for the King's return and the impact of his return on the Kingdom will be immeasurable.

On the regional level, Israel will conduct elections for a new parliament and a new prime minister. The odds favour an effective change of leadership which will consequently push the peace process forward. The last three years of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rule saw the peace talks with the Palestinians frustrated, and the prime minister unable to implement agreements. Any change in Israel offers new hope for comprehensive peace between Israel and the Arabs.

On the Iraqi front, there is growing realisation that the region cannot afford any further procrastination on the resolution of the crisis. After last month's aerial and missile strikes against Iraq, the stage is set for an effective resolution of the standoff between Baghdad and Washington. There is also hope that sanctions on Libya will end this year. Tripoli on the one hand, and Washington and London on the other, seem to be on the verge of agreement on the terms for the trial of the two Libyan nationals accused of blowing up a Pan Am plane over Lockerbie in 1988.

Internationally, the eyes of the world will be focused on the impeachment proceeding against President Bill Clinton expected to be long and drawn out. As long as the future of Clinton remains unresolved, international stability will certainly suffer. President Clinton's alleged brush with the law has affected not only the American people, but also the world at large.

On another front, the landmark Landmine Ban Convention is expected to come into force in 1999 after more than 53 countries ratified it. This will indeed be good news for the campaigners who have pinned great hopes on the treaty, adopted in Ottawa in December 1997, to end the widespread and indiscriminate deaths caused by millions of anti-personnel mines scattered all over the world. Likewise, the International Criminal Court is expected to come into being in 1999 after an increasing number of countries have already signed and ratified its statute. This would be a great achievement for the cause of humanitarian law.

The introduction of the new European currency, the euro, is obviously a dramatic event not only for the concerned European states but for the global economy as a whole. There is a growing consensus that the euro will bring greater stability to currency markets everywhere and therefore will be a positive development for international trade and commerce.

Yet the picture for 1999 is not going to be all rosy. The conflict in Kosovo will go on simmering throughout the new year. The African continent is expected to witness additional warfare and armed conflicts. Southeast Asia's economies may not recover from 1998's near meltdown. The cause of democracy and human rights in several south Asian countries remains troubled and vulnerable. The same goes for some parts of Latin America where stability and the rule of law remain absent. The socio-economic woes which haunt that continent cannot be expected to fizzle out in just one year.

But with each new year, new hope for better tidings shines through the hearts and souls of mankind everywhere.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Dustour said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent statements and decision to destroy Lebanon's infrastructure and economy if it attacks Israel's northern settlement renew the issue of the 25-year-old Israeli objectives in that country. These aims include minimising Lebanon's regional role, robbing its natural resources and destroying its national power, said an editorial. Nobody agrees with attacking civilians, but even the blind can appreciate that Lebanese resistance is a self-defence against Israeli missiles, the paper added. Netanyahu's stubborn decision, in fact, aims to support his election campaign, said the editorial. The newspapers called on the international community and the Arabs to stop any aggression that could destroy Lebanon's years of hard work.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket reviewed 1998's incidents. Last year, he said, Jordan witnessed the water contamination crisis, the restructuring programme's failure and an increase in economic depression, unemployment and poverty. On the Palestinian front, Israel pursued stubborn policies to guarantee peace on its own terms through forcing more Palestinian concessions. The intifada has been renewed to face settlements' expansion. Sanctions are still imposed on Iraq, Libya and Sudan. International oil prices have dropped causing a deep economic crisis for oil states. Saket said the formation in mid-1998 of a new Jordanian government, promised to implement the national dialogue. The recent U.S.-British air strikes against Iraq failed to achieve their objectives while the Arab nations strongly condemned the aggression and called on their governments to end the embargo. For the first time since the U.S. unilateral role in the new world order, the whole world disagrees with the superpower's policies and domination.

Resistance to privatisation must be overcome

Sunday's Economic Pulse



Dr. Fahed Fanek

By Sue Zeidler
Editor

the public opinion in favour of privatisation, or at least to neutralise groups that have no vested interest in resisting privatisation. Public opinion is definitely an important factor and should not be ignored, but its resistance should not be overestimated.

The fate of the country's privatisation programme depends first and foremost on the behaviour of the government. It can succeed and prevail if it displays the political will to make decisions and follow up by prompt implementation. The Jordanian economy, at the time, has been in deep recession for quite some years. No one is happy about the current situation or ready to defend the status quo. This is an ideal time to introduce major changes including privatisation. There is nothing to fear except higher unemployment and a further spread of poverty.

investors.

The government in general, and its economic team in particular, together with the Executive Unit of Privatisation in the Prime Ministry, are required to make real efforts to gain the support of



The introduction of the euro; history in the making

By Umaya Toukan

AS OF the first day of the New Year, 1999, the single European currency, the euro, is the legal tender in 11 European countries, namely Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Finland, Ireland, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Portugal and Spain. The other four country members of the European Union, namely the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden and Greece are, for the moment, outside the euro zone. While the United Kingdom, Sweden and Denmark have chosen not to join the euro club for the time being, Greece did not qualify according to what is known as the "conversion criteria" conditions. These conditions which form an integral part of the Maastricht Treaty signed in February 1992, relate to the real rate of interest and exchange rate fluctuations, both considered traditionally within the domain of monetary policy, and to the fiscal government budget deficit as well as the level of government debt, but considered traditionally within the domain of fiscal policy. In brief then, the convergence criteria refer to monetary and to fiscal policies of member states. More specifically, four convergence criteria have been established:

1. Member states must avoid excessive government deficits. Their performance is measured against two reference ratios: 3 per cent of GDP for the annual government budget deficit and 60 per cent of GDP for the stock of government debt.

2. Inflation should not exceed by more than 1.5 percentage points that of the three best performing member states in terms of price stability in the previous year.

3. The country's currency must have remained within the normal fluctuation margins of the European Monetary System (EMS) for at least two years.

4. Long-term interest rates should not exceed by more than 2 percentage points the average of the three member states with the lowest rates in the union.

The fact that (14) member states have already qualified for the euro is an indication that the above conditions are attainable. Furthermore, the available evidence suggests that the above conditions may have an adverse effect, in the short and medium run at least, on the level of employment and economic growth. Thus, decisions regarding the euro have incorporated a high degree of political will and public debate not only on the grounds of economic outcomes but also on the grounds of the trade-off between national sovereignty and regional identity.

The changeover from national currencies to the euro will take place over three stages:

1. STAGE I, which in effect starts and ends on January 1, 1999. During this stage, conversion rates between the national currencies and the EURO are to be irrevocably fixed. This important step already took place at 12:30 on 31/12/1998 in Brussels. The European finance and economics ministers signed this irrevocable commitment in a meeting of the Council of Ministers of the European Union. Outside the building of the Council of Ministers in Brussels, big celebrations took place by the public to commemorate this historic event (for actual conversion rates see box). STAGE I will also witness the coming into force of all legislation related to the EURO. Final STAGE I involves the switch to the EURO in the European money and foreign exchange markets. While most people will be celebrating the New Year over a long weekend, the banking industry will be celebrating the New Year in their offices implementing the switch of all bank accounts and monetary instruments to the EURO. On New Years Eve, European television stations showed banks' employees, all over Europe, behind their terminals effecting the switch over to the EURO.

2. STAGE II, which is in effect the transition period and extends from January 1, 1999 - December 31, 2001. During this period, the newly-established European Central Bank in Frankfurt will start its operations. All financial markets (equity and bond markets) will convert their issues to Euro. During the transition period, the Euro can be used for all non-cash transactions and anyone can have a EURO bank account.

3. STAGE III, which is the final stage and covers the period January 1, 2002 to July 1, 2002 at the latest. During this final stage EURO bank notes and coins will be brought into circulation while national currency notes and coins will be withdrawn gradually. By July 1, 2002, the transition will be complete and national currency notes and coins will no longer be legal tender.

Thus by July 1, 2002, the process of European integration which started back in 1957 with the Treaty of Rome would be completed. The name of the single currency "euro" was actually agreed upon during a European meeting of the Council of Ministers in Madrid December 1995. At the time, Euro-skeptics said the idea would never materialise in our lifetime.

It may be early to draw lessons from this historic achievement. However, few facts dictate themselves:

1. The coordination of fiscal policies amongst different countries can be achieved. Perhaps, more significantly, a single monetary policy for countries with different endowments, size, and economic performance is possible. This is a breakthrough in traditional wisdom. The historical evidence has always suggested that it is not so easy to coordinate fiscal and monetary policies within the same country. Our experience in Jordan and in particular the episode of 1989 support that evidence.

2. Fiscal discipline and a sound monetary policy may produce in the short run adverse effects on employment and economic growth. This is also supported by our experience in Jordan. Strong political will and public understanding and support become essential ingredients for the success of any adjustment package. These elements have clearly been present in the European integration experience.

Important questions arise as to the impact of the EURO on international trade and in particular on developing countries such as Jordan. European productivity and efficiency, the role of the U.S. dollar, and the globalization of world economy in general. These are all justified and important concerns and I will try to address them in subsequent essays.

The writer is Jordan's ambassador in Brussels

Irrevocable conversion rates between the euro and 11 European currencies as of January 1, 1999.

One euro

= 40,399 Belgian Francs
= 2,20371 Dutch Guilders
= 40,399 Luxembourg Francs
= 5,94573 Finish Markka
= 0,787564 Irish Pound
= 1,95583 Deutsche Marks
= 13,7603 Austrian Shillings
= 6,55957 French Francs
= 1936,27 Italian Liras
= 166,386 Portuguese Escudos
= 200,482 Portuguese Escudos

Raising the stakes in Yemen

By Dr. Musa Keilani

WHEN I WAS in Yemen a few years ago, as a guest of Dr. Maqaleh of Sanaa University, the jocular suggestion to travel agents how better to advertise tour packages in Yemen was to publish "EXOTIC days in Yemen... KIDNAPPING guaranteed." But the comedy was completely shattered with Tuesday's tragedy where at least four hostages were killed in a rescue operation mounted by Yemeni security forces.

Until Monday, abductions in Yemen had been a ridiculous affair. The common belief was that all any tribe with any grievance had to do was to keep a close watch on roads running through its domain and stop vehicles most likely to carry foreign tourists. Bingo, they had a bargaining chip to use against the government.

None of the "hostages" involved in the dozens of "kidnap-and-release" dramas had come to any harm before. If anything, many of the hostages had apparently enjoyed their days in captivity where they were treated with respect and were exposed to traditional tribal hospitality in the most natural environment of a typical Yemeni village. A great experience for the adventurous spirit, particularly given that a typical tourist would pay an arm and a leg to the tour agent if they were to ask for a few days in traditional surroundings.

It was even suggested that Yemeni tribes could strike it rich if they were to agree with tour operators to include an offer of a few days of life in captivity for tourists as part of the tour package. But the latest episode changed all that. Most people had expected the Yemeni authorities to take a wait-and-see approach until the kidnappers could be persuaded to release their captives. But something went wrong some place.

The easy argument is that the Sanaa government, frustrated by being at the receiving end of ridicule as well as the potential threat to the \$100 million tourism revenues it makes every year, was determined to make good its warning that kidnappings would not be tolerated after imposing the death penalty for abductors.

Indeed, the Yemeni authorities have explained that security forces moved in when the kidnappers, believed to have been members of an underground extremist group, started killing hostages. That account has been questioned.

Whether it was wise on the part of the government to mount a rescue operation or whether it was warranted is subject to question. Whatever the outcome of inquiries, the reality is that four of the hostages lost their life and two others were seriously injured.

Beyond that, however, is the implication of the kidnapping drama. It was the first time a kidnapper group had raised political demands: the release of an Islamist leader and (ridiculous as it is) an end to the international sanctions against Iraq.

Until Monday, demands of Yemeni tribes taking hostages were for new roads, power connections, water supply, hospitals, bridges, schools, and even a public telephone. Other demands included pub-

Feature

By Sue Zeidler
Editor

the public opinion in favour of privatisation, or at least to neutralise groups that have no vested interest in resisting privatisation. Public opinion is definitely an important factor and should not be ignored, but its resistance should not be overestimated.

The fate of the country's privatisation programme depends first and foremost on the behaviour of the government. It can succeed and prevail if it displays the political will to make decisions and follow up by prompt implementation. The Jordanian economy, at the time, has been in deep recession for quite some years. No one is happy about the current situation or ready to defend the status quo. This is an ideal time to introduce major changes including privatisation. There is nothing to fear except higher unemployment and a further spread of poverty.

A taste

By Roufan

WHEN I WAS in Yemen a few years ago, as a guest of Dr. Maqaleh of Sanaa University, the jocular suggestion to travel agents how better to advertise tour packages in Yemen was to publish "EXOTIC days in Yemen... KIDNAPPING guaranteed." But the comedy was completely shattered with Tuesday's tragedy where at least four hostages were killed in a rescue operation mounted by Yemeni security forces.

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Until Monday, demands of Yemeni tribes taking hostages were for new roads, power connections, water supply, hospitals, bridges, schools, and even a public telephone. Other demands included pub-

1998 — a year to be rude and crude

By Sue Zeidler
Reuters

IF ANY lessons were learned this year in show business, it was that all those big names that glitter are not gold at the box office, and that rude and crude sells — as does rap.

It was a year in which superstars like Brad Pitt and Oprah Winfrey failed to ignite hits with their much anticipated films "Meet Joe Black" and "Beloved." But Harrison Ford struck a blow for every middle-aged man in America by being named the "Sexiest Man Alive" by People Magazine. And American actress Gwyneth Paltrow proved that you can succeed using either a British or an American accent — as long as you look good.

All sorts of expressive films bit the dust — "Godzilla" failed to frighten anyone in a comeback bid and "Primary Colours" did as poorly at the box office as President Bill Clinton is doing with a Republican Congress.

But make a film in which the hero gets his penis caught in a zip and a fishhook stuck in his cheek and you've got a hit.

The scatological humour of "There's Something About Mary"

churned out profits by the gross and the animated TV hit "South Park," which has vomiting characters and talking dung, earned widespread mass appeal.

Talk about not for the squeamish: World War II came thundering back with a vengeance with Steven Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan" hailed by public and critics alike for recreating the horrors of war as few other films ever have. And an Italian film about Hitler's death camps, "Life is Beautiful," won international awards.

The success of blunt in-your-face rawness carried over into music even though many record executives donned suits and tried to put on a big show for Wall Street this year as the industry turned ever more corporate with one major company swallowing another.

But the real superstars in music in 1998 were the "rap pack" entrepreneurs who turned out innovative and lucrative hits with the help of heavy street marketing.

"God knows, the movie studios spend tonnes of money to successfully predict the marketplace, but they often fail," said Ted Rosenblatt, president of Los Angeles-based PFG Entertainment, which finances and

licenses the rights to independent films.

"A perfect indication was that some stars just couldn't open movies," he said, citing Pitt and "Meet Joe Black," a film that cost about \$80 million to make, but has taken only about \$40 million since opening in mid-November.

The film was one of several box office disappointments this year for Seagram's Universal Studios, where several high-level heads have rolled as a result, giving Hollywood a real-life soap opera of its own.

Conversely, experts noted the latest Jim Carrey film "The Truman Show," a much-praised satire, was a hit even though its last attempt at drama was the 1996 box office disappointment "The Cable Guy." "The last Jim Carrey movie (Truman) succeeded because it was a good movie arguably and not because it was a typical Jim Carrey comedy," Rosenblatt said.

"Big stars no longer guarantee an audience. People are looking at the material and the story and the overall quality of the pictures," said Jay Cooper, an entertainment lawyer.

Teenage-heartthrob Leonardo DiCaprio's appearance in Woody Allen's "Celebrity" failed to cause a

stir despite his 1997 smash hit "Titanic." And while actress Julia Roberts still commands as much as \$17 million for a romantic comedy, her run as reigning box office queen may soon be usurped by Cameron Diaz, who is riding the wave of silly success from "There's Something About Mary." Ben Stiller, who played Diaz's suitor in the low-brow, low-budget comedy about a young man's quest for his long-lost dream date, has also become a Hollywood heavyweight.

Another surprising success story is Adam Sandler, who turned from box office lightweight to superstar overnight with surprising hits like "The Waterboy" and "The Wedding Singer." 1998 was the year every expert predicted that Will Smith, a rapper, would soon become one of the screen's biggest stars.

U.S. television's year was dominated by quirky drama and animation, led by the offbeat hit comedy-drama "Ally McBeal" about a bony, neurotic, single lawyer, and "South Park." "I think people are looking for something unique and not the same old formula in television. The ratings go into the toilet if it's the same old thing and that's why 'South Park' and 'Ally McBeal'

broke through this year," said Cooper.

Gimmicky shows or programmes about the complexities of relationships showed the greatest growth in the number of viewers on the small screen with "Ally McBeal," the legal drama "The Practice" and "Buffy The Vampire Slayer" among the year's biggest winners.

It was a year in which the popular "Seinfeld," the show about nothing, went off the air amid a storm of publicity or "much ado about nothing."

And it was a year in which bad taste talk shows going too far — like the frequent fistfights on "The Jerry Springer Show." The biggest merger in music history — the marriage between Seagram's Universal Music Group and PolyGram **PLG.AS** — shook an industry now run largely by big conglomerates who churn out hits to boost stock prices.

And while music sales for the global \$40 billion industry are poised to show growth for the year overall, the overriding trend on the charts appeared to be a lack of trend. "The trend is no trend in music," said Cooper, whose clients include singer/songwriter Sheryl Crow.

On any given week, the charts are topped with a diverse list of stars ranging from soft-pop singer Celine Dion to heavy metal band Metallica to country stars Garth Brooks and Shania Twain and rap stars Master P and Puff Daddy.

But many believe that if any musical truth emerged in 1998, it was that rap music was under-estimated.

"The trend this year was towards rap music becoming a mainstream genre of music and I believe it will continue in 1999 and be fused with other music forms," said Doug Morris, CEO of the Universal Music Group, now the world's biggest music company.

"It's one of the major acknowledgments that we in the music business have to accept this year. A lot of us thought rap would be limited in its appeal, but record companies have learned a lot from these entrepreneurs who took their music to the streets," Morris added.

Master P and Puff Daddy each earned more than \$50 million this year by performing on and producing their own labels and gaining popularity with heavy but savvy street marketing, word of mouth, posters, web sites and ads.

Books and culture

The future in a cup

A taste for fortunetelling is sweeping the country, but what can you reasonably expect to hear from a cup-reader

By Roufan Nahhas

AMMAN — I have learnt, mainly from books on science and Murphy's Law, that what is going to happen (that is, if it is meant to happen) will happen, if not today, then tomorrow — so why is everyone so curious to find out what will happen in the future? To find out, and following friends' advice, I found myself in front of a highly recommended cup-reader, a true professional in her field.

Apparently there is nothing fancy to it: if you want to peek into the future, all you need is a cup of coffee, some time to waste and most of all belief: not so much belief in the future as much as disbelief in the present.

Salma, the 22-year-old cup reader I visited, has a dark complexion, wears colourful clothes and sports an enigmatic look about her plain, well-cared-for face. She is well known for dealing in cups of coffee and fate. The jingling sound of the gold chains around her arms adds that little extra to the atmosphere, so when I slurped down the last

sip of coffee, curiosity, like a gnawing hunger, started grumbling as I waited for secrets from my future to be revealed to me. Whether we believe or not, we all want to know.

Dr. Musa Shitawi, professor of sociology at the Jordan University says that there has always been a trend by people to want to know the future.

"Ages ago people had this fascination about the unknown, the mysterious. They tried several methods to discover what is in store for them," he said.

A visit to a cup-reader is enough to reveal, not only the future, but also your own naivete and innocence. Some see it in escape from their everyday suffering, while others merely view it as a pleasant experience.

University student Yara Eriakat said that she does not believe in fortunetellers at all, but goes there anyway.

"It is all for fun, although sometimes they say things that can be right," she said.

A fish, a rabbit, a long road, financial crises,

death even doomsday can be on a cup-reader's list, whose ranks include both professionals and amateurs. Alia, a 25-old nurse, reads the cups as a hobby.

"We all have long roads ahead of us, problems to face, weddings and funerals to attend, news to hear," she said.

"I know it is nonsense, but we do it for fun, especially when we have nothing to do or we have friends coming for a visit," she added with a smile.

"For some, reading cups is a social activity, for others it is a job that pays no taxes, which is easy to perform, with no strict working hours and most importantly — keeps you and your kids from starving," Shitawi pointed out.

Professionals such as Salma say that the curved lines and dots of the coffee residue make pictures, and what is significant is what these pictures represent.

"Deciphering these pictures depend on their meaning within a specific society," according to Shitawi, who added that most fortunetellers make generalisations in order that his

or her "readings" can apply to anyone.

"Fortunetelling is in many ways a deceptive kind of therapy for those who feel insecure," he said and added that it may give rise to obsessive behaviours in which the fortune teller is constantly consulted over any problem in a person's life: "Whether it is searching for love, wealth or just hope, following this trend can negatively affect people's lives," he warned (Ronald Reagan: a case in point?).

After some time Salma placed the cup between her slim fingers and started:

"A long straight line: international phone call — some black dots: news that will reach you, unmistakably bad — a smiling face: a baby. Wait, still more to come — a dove; happiness — a hand; a friend trying to help — some clouds; a trouble."

All these fit pretty well into the scheme of things, mine as well as everyone else's, but Salma was good, and soon had me rattled.

"There is a dark cloud: something bothering you, and you can't make a decision to end it." (Yes, that sounds familiar).

"A close person to you lost a friend and this brought tears to your eyes" (How, I thought, could she know this. I was here to write an article but that suddenly seemed secondary).

My eyes grew bigger and bigger with that stare — you know, the one you have while sitting behind the computer and a "system error" message you can't understand forces you to click OK and restart your computer.

I continued to listen without prejudice to her 3 dinars worth of wisdom (no Visa or MasterCards, only cash).

Salma calmly asked me to place my thumb at the bottom of the cup, which I did without a question.

"You have a big heart and a clear mind," she said. (Apparently the thumbprint can reveal your true personality).

But then, if I had a clear mind would I place my destiny in a stranger's hand?

To my amazement and disbelief, Salma had made me stop for a second to reconsider my scepticism; for her it was just another satisfied customer.

Mountain lore

Traditions & Survival
Robert Chenciner
Cuzco Press 1997
307 pages, £19.95

SITUATED IN the rugged mountain peaks and deep valleys of north eastern Caucasus, Daghestan — Persian for the land of the mountains — is the size of Scotland, and is home to 32 distinct peoples. Each of these peoples has their own language, yet they share a surprisingly homogeneous culture that has both withstood over a century of Tsarist control and 70 years of repressive Soviet rule.

Robert Chenciner has travelled extensively throughout the region, and here he gives a fascinating account of the swiftly vanishing traditions and ways of life in the villages of this inaccessible mountainous area.

He has tried to record Daghestani culture, defining it by what the Soviets tried to suppress. But seeking out and establishing what the traditional and culture of mountain people is not only a problem in Daghestan, it is a microcosm of the ethnic problems in the ex-USSR republics, while mountain villages in Switzerland, Spain, France have suffered depopulation due to unemployment and the resulting flight to the cities. In Daghestan, with its variety of ethnic groups, two thirds of the total population live in over 700 mountain villages, yet the great liberating changes still sweeping ex-USSR republics have hardly reached there.

Daghestani societies are diverse, yet akin, from village to village, mountain to plains, the north eastern Caucasus to the whole Caucasus. Every event and every occasion, whether natural or man-made seems to be celebrated with a culinary accompaniment. Local feasts are linked with fertility, marriage, birth, male circumcision, a baby's first steps. All the peoples of Daghestan and the North Caucasus

Maya Angelou makes feature film directorial debut

By Sarah Tippit
Reuters

LITERARY LEGEND Maya Angelou, whose tales of growing up poor and black in the deep South have inspired millions, never thought she would direct a film about a black family written by a white man from southern Georgia.

"But I never thought I wouldn't," she said of her feature film directing debut, "Down In The Delta," which opened in U.S. theatres on Christmas Day.

In his endeavours to record Daghestani culture Chenciner has tried to assess the value of what remains — a substitute custom (like Christmas), a child's game, or a folk tale. This is essentially the link which connects Daghestani everyday lives to their traditions.

If the writer resisted me then I resisted him. If the writer did not include the fact that I was a human being and mentioned in some of her work African Americans or Chinese people, if the writer put people down, then I put him or her down. (Take)

Rudyard Kipling, with his racism and imperial stances ... I still did love his poem. I just pretended he didn't write it," Angelou told Reuters in an interview.

"Down In The Delta" — written by 43-year-old advertising executive Myron Goble, who had no prior screenwriting experience and never lived in the black ghettos he wrote about — is very strongly a strong human story, Angelou said.

Strong enough, it turned out, to convince her to detour from her writing so she could delve into film after a few stabs earlier at directing for stage and television and taking one cinematography class in Swedish.

"I wasn't excited about directing a film. I didn't think it would increase my understanding of life, only to find that of course it did. (The film) is a great human document, which could have taken place in Warsaw, Poland, or Warsaw, Montana." As for writer Goble, he said he was delighted that Angelou took an interest in his project.

"I had some time and a little bit of money that would allow me to write one screenplay to see if I could

explore that as a possible profession. I didn't know anything about," he said.

"At the end of this I didn't want (to write) the story of my life that I would love and my mama would love, but who would know if it was any good?"

So after reading a book about the African American migration out of the South to Chicago, Goble decided to write about the failed promise of prosperity in the North.

"I thought, 'Wouldn't it be interesting if a family in Chicago were relocated ... from an urban to a rural environment and were reacquainted with their relatives? They're a blood family with ties that are strong but they don't necessarily know or understand each other. That's how the idea came about,'" Goble said.

In the film, the journey is taken by Loretta (played by Alfre Woodard), a drug-addicted single mother who lives with her mother, Rosa Lynn (Mary Alice), and two young children in an inner-city Chicago neighbourhood.

Loretta has neglected her children and her son talks of getting "strapped" like his gun-toting classmates. Desperate to move her loved ones out of danger, Rosa Lynn pawns a prized family heirloom to send them to the family home in Mississippi to spend the summer with Uncle Earl (Al Freeman Jr.).

The story involves family reconciliation and regeneration and the soul-enhancing value of returning to roots. Wesley Snipes, who also served as the film's co-producer, appears in the film as Will, Earl's son.

Angelou said once she agreed to direct the film she got the actors she wanted "for peanut shells" and actually came in under her \$3.5 million budget. She wrapped herself around the project and filled in the cultural details — dialogue, experiences and attitudes common among African Americans — that Goble attempted to recreate but did not fully capture.

"It was set in the African American culture. There are many things he didn't know and couldn't know. ... I was able to bring what I know about that culture to bear," Angelou said.

"The thing that was so remarkable about (Goble) was that he loved his work and was not in love with it,

which means that his ego was not wrapped around it. He wanted a great film. If I said something he heard to be true, he said please do it. Now that's somebody to work with."

For one thing, Angelou eliminated all profanity from the film. "I ask that we say what we mean to say, use our intelligence to say what we mean to say. Don't punctuate it with profanity. I do want to show that you really can use English to make yourself understood."

Goble said he agreed with all of Angelou's changes. "When I finished this project I set two conditions for myself. One was remember you're white. The other was there are a lot of humorous moments in the picture," he said.

"It does reflect somebody who grew up in the TV sitcom era, so be aware of that as well. Dr. Angelou is someone who filled in with a knowledge that I don't have and at the same time much more subtle in her storytelling. ... This was a journey of illumination for myself and Dr. Angelou."

Angelou's own childhood journey, which profoundly influenced much of her work, took her from St. Louis to rural Stamps, Arkansas, where she was raised by her grandmother. As a child she was raped by her mother's boyfriend. After she testified against him, she was beaten to death.

"I was 7-1/2 and my 7-1/2 year-old logic deduced that my voice had killed him. So I stopped speaking for almost six years," she said. Her grandmother read, telling her: "Sister, Mama loves to see you read that poetry. You know what poetry will do for you? It will put starch in your backbone." "I memorised (the poetry)," said Angelou, now 70, who believes age has taught her courage.

"There are two themes in all my work. I mean to say we may encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated. It may be necessary to encounter the defeats so one can find out just who he or she is. That is one (theme) and the other is that human beings are more alike than unlike," she said.

"And I was thinking about the journeys in the film. Journey back to the roots. Journey to the heart. We're all on journeys."

If pain persists, take two

By Jean-Claude Elias

THE VERSATILITY of PCs has become a burden as much as it is a blessing. The number of tasks these machines

8 Economy

ECB sees steady start to euro trade Euro is born, markets gear up for debut

BRUSSELS (Reuters) — Eleven European nations formally ditched their currencies on Friday to launch the new shared euro, triggering one of the financial sector's biggest operations.

The euro, expected to rival the dollar as the world's leading currency, begins trading in earnest early on Monday (1800 GMT Sunday), although Dutch ABN AMRO bank claimed on Friday to have struck the first euro deal, selling five million euros (\$5.85 million) against dollars in Bombay.

Before Monday, tens of thousands of staff at banks and businesses across Europe have to complete well-choreographed preparations, converting trillions of dollars worth of shares and bonds from old currencies into euros and ensuring that computerised trading systems can cope with the swapover.

Close to 300 million Europeans in Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain now share a single currency for the first time since the Roman Empire.

While consumers must wait until 2002 for new euro notes and coins, they can open bank and credit card accounts, pay mortgages and use travellers' cheques in euros.

Old national currencies will still pay for cash purchases, but the mark, franc and others are now officially mere euro constituents.

Britain, Denmark, Sweden and Greece are outside the euro zone for now, but in London, Europe's main financial centre, preparations for a smooth euro transition were in full swing.

Major banks and broking houses have laid on hotel beds, taxis and entertainment for staff over the long

weekend as computer systems are reconfigured to adopt the new currency.

Salomon Smith Barney bank promised 300 staff working over the weekend a late New Year's Eve party — in two weeks.

In Brussels, Europe's self-styled capital, hundreds of bank staff saw in the New Year at their offices.

At Euroclear, one of the international organisations overseeing payments on the bond markets, more than 200 technicians and bankers rationed themselves to a sip of champagne amid piles of flowcharts and computer printouts.

"This is the most important weekend for us. Its the fulfilment of four years work," Pierre Slechten, Euroclear's managing director, told Reuters television.

The euro will bring dramatic changes to the global financial scene and to the way Europeans do business with each other and with the rest of the world.

Travellers will be able to buy goods across Europe without the cost of changing money. Consumers will be able to compare prices in different countries, which is expected to narrow the wide price gaps existing now.

Businesses operating in the euro zone, which accounts for almost one fifth of world economic output and trade, will save on transaction costs and be able to plan with more certainty.

Politicians hailed the euro birth as a major step towards economic growth, job creation and, crucially, deeper European political integration.

"The euro...will bring us more choice with our purchases, lower prices, new markets, new investment possibilities and therefore

jobs," French President Jacques Chirac said in a New Year's statement.

"With the euro, Europeans are going to be closer to one another, and stronger as well."

Critics, however, fear a loss of national sovereignty over key economic decisions and a blurring of countries' identities.

Britain's staunchly eurosceptic daily Sun newspaper said the 11 countries adopting the euro had all begun to die.

The euro launch was met with quiet bemusement on Europe's streets on Friday, while EU officials admit a huge task remains to win over the hearts and minds of euro-zone citizens.

"I haven't really thought that much about it," Dutch pensioner Martien Assies said. "We're not really going to notice much of a difference in daily life, are we?"

In Helsinki, shopkeepers gave the euro a mixed reception. "I don't know when we will have prices in euros. Is there a law now? I guess we'll do it only when we have to," said supermarket cashier Tuina Ruitanen.

"I think the euro is a good thing, it will compete well with the dollar...but the transition period is way too long," said chemist Tarija Laitalainen. "Both the euro and markka should be in use so consumers can choose," she said. "We have three years to soothe fears and...explain that the euro means more growth, more jobs," European Monetary Affairs Commissioner Yves-Thibault de Silguy said on Thursday.

Meanwhile, European Central Bank officials on Saturday predicted a steady start to trading in the new euro currency on Monday and hailed its economic benefits as preparations by banks continued without

apparent hitches.

ECB Vice President Christian Noyer, one of the officials now in charge of monetary policy for the 11 nations that launched the euro on Friday, said Europe's single currency was in no danger of becoming too strong against the dollar and yen.

He said there was no reason to fear heavy demand for euro-denominated shares and bonds, which could lead to a strong appreciation of the euro and thereby make European exports more expensive in other currencies.

ECB board member Eugenio Domingo Solans said he expected euro-related changes to computer systems and accounts at banks and exchanges to go smoothly this weekend.

"The systems and procedures have been carefully checked. If there were any failure, back-up and emergency mechanisms would take over," he told the Spanish newspaper Expansion.

"Risks have been reduced to the minimum; nevertheless, I'll be crossing my fingers on January 4."

Some 50,000 staff at banks and businesses across Europe continued to spend the New Year weekend redenominating stocks and bonds into euros, adapting computer systems and converting mountains of data.

Roger Bates, director of the EMU project team for investment banking at Deutsche Bank in London, said around 600 of the company's 6,000 employees were at work.

"The experience so far has been a very positive one, and has shown the value of the dress rehearsal over the previous few months," he said.

Mara Pengopi, a forex official at ABN Amro in Amsterdam, said the

bank's conversion programme was running ahead of schedule.

The Bank of Spain said it successfully completed preparations to handle bourse trading in euros at 7:00 a.m. local time on Saturday.

Saturday was expected to be a lower-key day for banks after the announcement of the euro exchange rates for member currencies on Thursday and the official launch on Friday.

But the pace will step up again on Sunday evening, when Sydney becomes the first financial centre to officially trade the new currency. The start of trading there is at 5:00 a.m. on Monday (1800 GMT Sunday).

The main test will come on Monday evening when banks settle their transactions after the first day of trade in euros.

ECB officials on Saturday reiterated their belief that the currency would lead to a period of economic stability in the near term for the countries in the euro zone: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

ECB Chief Economist Ottmar Issing said there was no threat of deflation in the euro area at present but it could not be ruled out in the future.

Declines in import and producer prices in eurozone countries over recent months have sparked concern that Europe might be on the brink of deflation, a process of price declines which can lead to a contraction of economic activity.

Board member Domingo Solans said the current euro-zone interest rate of three per cent was not an obstacle to growth or job creation.

Euro could create 8,000 jobs a year in Belgium

BRUSSELS (AFP) — The launch of the euro single currency could boost growth by 0.25

per cent and create an extra 8,000 jobs a year in Belgium, the governor of the coun-

try's central bank said Saturday.

"The potential growth trend for Belgium at the moment is around 2.0 per cent while for Euroland it is about 2.5 per cent," Alfons Verplaetse told the Flemish business daily Financieel Tijds.

Verplaetse said his "prudent and minimalist" estimate was a purely personal opinion, not based on any

the potential growth rate in Belgium rising from 2.0 to 2.25 per cent.

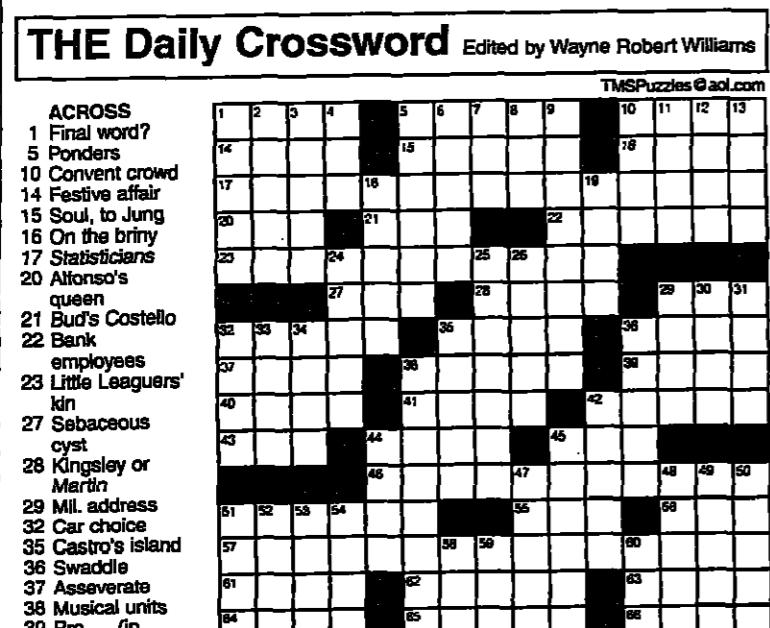
"That 0.25 per cent extra growth should lead to the annual creation of between 7,000 and 8,000 jobs."

Verplaetse said his "prudent and minimalist" estimate was a purely personal opinion, not based on any

official assessment of the euro's impact.

The governor said he also expected monetary union to lead to a wave of mergers between Belgian banks and their foreign rivals and to act as a "catalyst" for further social and economic harmonisation in Europe.

Super Deluxe Furnished Apartment For Rent
Consists of 3 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, a large salon and dining area, maid's room, independent central heating, telephone, satellite, a large veranda with Foreign furniture. Location: Jabal Amman, between 4th & 5th Circles. For information, 5673438, Um Anton.



ACROSS
1 Final word?
5 Ponders
10 Convenient crowd
14 Festive affair
15 Soul to Jung
16 The bumpy
17 Statisticians
20 Altered's
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21 Bud's Costello
22 Bank
employees
23 Little Leaguers'
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28 Kingsley or
Merlin
29 MIL address
30 Car choice
35 Castro's Island
36 Swaddle
37 Aspernate
38 Musical units
39 Pro (in
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40 Fishing pole
41 Baltic Sea
feeder
42 Calumny's kin
43 Hill dweller?
44 Gulf of the
Arabian Sea
45 Devotee
46 Malicious
campaigners
51 Soap opera
55 Type
56 Catch on
57 Know-it-all
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61 — Spumante
62 Period in a
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63 Church recess
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65 Impatient
66 Mulligan's dish

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3 Violinist Mischa
4 Seize suddenly
5 Abandon
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6 Full-length
7 Knight's title
8 Ostrich kin

9 Final-and-wine
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10 Okinawa port
11 Computer
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12 Nudnik
13 Be mouthy
18 Degenerves
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19 Swear
24 Miniature
25 Makes tighter
26 Burning coal
29 Saudi, e.g.
30 Meat paste
31 Milky gem
32 Legendary tale
33 Author Hunter
34 Quick and
skillful
35 Cryptographic
36 Twist and
squeaze
38 Knobby
42 Sri
44 Oriental
nursemaid
45 Packing
material
47 Feudal lord

48 Land of the
Copts
49 Singer Delta
50 Spread here
and there
51 Confidence
game
52 "Born Free"
lioness

53 Repetitive
routines
54 Storklike
wading bird
58 Old-time
actress Hagen
59 Droop
60 Existed at one
time

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt 'n' Jeff



Jordan Times, Sunday, January 3, 1999

Exchange Rates

Thursday, 31-12-98

ACCESS 4446888

CURRENCY	JORDAN DINAR	US DOLLAR	GERMAN MARK	SWITZERLAND FRANC	GBRITISH POUND	ITALY LIRA	ACCESS 4446888
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1887	0.1927	1.8780	1.8385	0.1944	2.3475 0.7080
BAUDI RIAL	5.2987	1.0000	1.0211	9.9209	9.7439	1.0302	12.4387 3.7515
UAE DIRHAM	5.1893	0.9793	1.0000	9.7454	9.5426	0.9898	1.0778 3.6740
BAIRANI DINAR	0.9325	1.0000	1.0283	0.9782	0.9726	1.0138	1.2500 0.3780
OMAN RIAL	0.9438	1.0259	0.9915	1.0212	1.0000	1.0567	1.2768 1.1129 3.8415
QATAR RIAL	5.1434	0.9877	0.9912	9.6952	9.4582	1.0000	1.0683 0.0085 3.0161
KUWAIT DINAR	0.4280	0.9804	0.9821	0.8000	0.7834	0.9821	1.1021 0.0000 3.4087
EGYPT POUND	4.8145	0.9278	0.9275	8.0416	8.6535	0.9861	11.3021 1.0000 3.4087
LEBANON LIRA	2.0544	4.1928	4.1928	40.3448	39.5055	4.1769	50.4310 4.4621 15.2100
US DOLLAR	1.2124	0.2667	0.2722	2.6225	2.5973	0.2746	3.3158 1.0000
GERMANY MARK	0.6395	1.0000	1.0188	1.5974	1.5642	1.0654	1.7677 0.6022
SWITZERLAND FRANC	2.3702	0.4473	0.4568	4.4512	4.3554	0.4600	5.2676 0.4823 1.6781
ITALY LIRA	23.4540	4.4285	4.5216	44.0650	43.1482	4.5200	55.0812 1.0000
BELGIUM FRANC	4.0082	9.2302	9.4249	91.8488	93.9739	9.5030	114.9110 34.9270
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	2.3004	0.4341	0.4433	4.3201	4.2932	0.4473	5.4021 0.4778 1.6081
GREEK DRACHMA	4.0014	0.9752	0.7711	7.5148	7.3033	0.5218	8.2997 0.5574 1.5000
CYPRUS POUND	2.6836	0.9065	0.5171	5.0380	4.8348	0.5030	5.3120 3.0000 1.5000
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	2.6780	1.1475	1.3138	31.3210	30.8893	3.1246	35.1512 11.8080
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1871	0.4128	0.4215	4.1074	4.0220	0.4252	5.1343 0.4543 1.5485
EURO	1.2094	0.2282	0.2391	2.2712	2.2239	0.2351	2.6390 0.2512 0.6562

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Central Bank expects JD46 million financial gap in '99 to widen to JD100m in 2000

** The current account of the balance of payments is expected to register a JD121 million in 1999 or 2.2 per cent of the gross domestic product compared to an expected JD50 million deficit for 1998 or one per cent of the gross domestic product.

This forecast was part of a memorandum presented by the Central Bank of Jordan to the Lower House of Parliament outlining the monetary policy and measures taken during 1998.

The widening deficit is envisaged to result from a higher deficit in the balance of trade by about JD117 million, or 7.5 per cent of the gross domestic product, and a JD51 million increase in the surplus of the balance of services. The bigger trade deficit is seen resulting from imports rising by 5.5 per cent to meet the expected growth in economic activity and from exports going up by 3.1 per cent in anticipation of renewed activity of exports to traditional markets.

As for the balance of services, the Central Bank expects revenue from travel and tourism to rise by 3.1 per cent and from expatriate remittances by 3.2 per cent. As for the net unrequited transfers, the Central Bank sees it almost maintaining the same level with a slight JD6 million decline. Financial aid to the government was predicted at no more than the JD256 million level.

The capital account was forecast to post a JD234 million surplus, JD126 million higher than the 1998 figure. This net result was expected from drawing more on undisbursed foreign loans lesser repayments by about JD85

million and JD28 million respectively. Taking all the aforementioned expectations into consideration, the Central Bank predicts that financial gap of about JD46 million will appear in 1999. This gap is even forecast to widen to around JD100 million in the year 2000.

In the memorandum, the Central Bank stated the following steps to be pursued in 1999:

1) To deepen the achievements of past years in terms of monetary stability and confidence in dinar as both are considered the fundamental pillars for sustained economic growth.

2) To continue indirect intervention in managing the monetary policy which in whole depends on market forces and characterised by transparency, flexibility and comprehensiveness.

Within this framework, the memorandum said, the Central Bank will seek to review the public debt law and to upgrade it to be in line with the financial and monetary developments witnessed by the Kingdom over the past few years and in line with the aims of the financial and monetary policies. "Such an approach would provide the necessary flexibility for the government to borrow through internal public debt tools instead of direct borrowing from banks," the Central Bank said.

The Central Bank aims at developing the capital market in the coming stage through a diversification of medium and long-term financial tools which are now possible in light of the new securities and companies laws," the memorandum concluded.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR JANUARY, SUNDAY 3, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

1998 was a good year for Hollywood

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Hollywood entered the New Year after recording close to \$7 billion in profits for 1998, a 10 per cent hike over 1997. Daily Variety has said.

The movie industry owes a lot to the growing secondary video movie market which was expected to earn more than \$1.1 billion in the North American market and another \$1 billion internationally. Daily Variety said.

Overall, theatre ticket sales in the U.S. and Canada were up by five per cent to 1.38 billion tickets — the highest number of sales since 1996.

For the fifth time since 1990, Buena Vista (owned by Disney) came out ahead of its competitors, taking \$1.1 billion in receipts — or 12.7 per cent of the market — and pocketing another one billion abroad.

Paramount came second with \$1.085 billion. James Cameron's "Titanic" accounted for 40 per cent of Paramount's total box-office profits, the paper said.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You'll be in a much calmer frame of mind today. It's partially because the moon has gone into Leo, giving you a tendency to settle down. It also turns your mind a little more to other people. Since Leo is such a romantic sign, you might find yourself falling in love, an excellent way to spend this beautiful Sunday.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You'll want to stick close to home today. That's your nature most of the time, anyway. You'd rather have people come to your house than vice versa. Besides, your home is so comfortable, most folks want to come over. If you put the word out, you could have more than you can afford to feed. Tell them to bring snacks.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You're in the mood to learn. Maybe you'd like to snuggle up with a good book, but today's lesson can't be learned that way. You're going to have to get out and practice. That could be fun, especially if what you're learning is something like skiing or roller-blading. Make sure you've got a good coach and the rest will be easy.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You may feel a tad pressed, but don't give up. The person who's giving you the most trouble is the one who needs your advice. This may take diplomacy and tact, but you can do it. Soften him or her up with good smells from the kitchen and even the rattiest scuffer will settle down and listen. Don't waste your breath before then.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There's quite a bit of work to be done, and that's true the whole time the sun's in Capricorn. It goes right through your solar sixth house of service, so you should be serving other people right now. That's an uncomfortable situation, but good for you nonetheless. The more you take care of others, of course, the more they'll take care of you.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Somebody could be laying a guilt trip on you today. You don't have to accept it. Knowing you, you've been meticulous about meeting your promises. Now it looks like somebody wants something else on top of all that. If this is your day of rest, you get to decide whether you're going to do it or not.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) There's a hassle going on in your life right now that your friends can help you with. One of your buddies can see something you're missing. That's why God put so many of us on this planet — so we can view situations from a multiplicity of perspective. Today it could be your turn to learn.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You have to kow-tow to an older person and pretend he or she is in authority over you, even though you know that's ludicrous. You allow some people to think they're leading you, but that's just so they'll be out there catching the flack. Let the person with the big mouth have centre stage while you sit back and watch.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a good day for travel. Looks like you have good friends you could visit, and a good reason for going there. You could also get a lucky break later on, as something you thought was not going to happen comes through the way you wanted it to. It's your attitude that makes the difference.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) This is an excellent day to make a deal. Why settle for lesser quality when you can get the best? Today, it looks like it's on sale. Items for your home are the best investment, including a new home itself. Have you been thinking about getting a new place? If so, go shopping now. Somebody else's disaster could be your big opportunity.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You've been breezing along for the last few days with perfect composure, today, somebody may hit one of your hot buttons. Just remember what you've been telling everybody else. Take deep breaths, relax and keep thinking. "A hundred years from now, what the heck difference will it make?"

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You've probably got the mood to do something productive. You've probably got a lot of energy built up by now. It figures, since you've been absorbing so much of other people's energy lately. Well, they're feeling better now, and it's partially because of you. So let them help out a little with your chores.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

AFM FROM 08-12-98 TO 08-12-98
ACCESS 4646868

COMPANY	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
BANKS			
AMAR BN	210,000	214,000	+1.80%
ATL BN	1,630	1,730	+6.07%
CARO ARABIA BN	2,560	2,650	+3.52%
CBN OF JO	1,360	1,270	-7.01%
DEUTSCHE BN	1,650	1,650	0.00%
INDUSTRIAL BN	1,410	1,470	+4.20%
THE HOUING BN	2,840	2,770	-2.50%
JO. KUWAIT BN	1,560	1,560	0.00%
JO. UNION BN	1,660	1,700	+2.35%
JO. ISLAMIC BN	1,660	1,740	+5.07%
JO. INVESTOR BN	1,400	1,470	+5.00%
JO. TECNICO BN	0.740	0.740	0.00%
JO. BANC COR	2,500	2,500	0.00%
PHILADELPHIA BN	0.550	0.570	+3.64%
BANKS INDEX			
	281,730	- 142	+2.58%
INSURANCE			
JO. INS	3,000	2,900	-3.33%
ABARAB SEAS INS	2,700	2,700	0.00%
JO. ARABIC INS	2,700	2,700	0.00%
AMAR INS	1,900	1,920	+1.05%
JO. GULF INS	1,450	1,500	+3.52%
ABAR UNION INTL INS	1,070	1,080	+1.03%
JO. ALGER INS	2,650	3,000	+12.50%
INSURANCE INDEX			
	124,690	- 142	+1.03%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1,460	1,480	+1.37%
HOTEL TOURISM	9,430	10,400	+10.20%
IRIB ELECTRICITY	1,250	1,250	0.00%
LETAJ TRAVEL	1,240	1,240	0.00%
ABAR INFL HOTELS	2,750	4,900	+75.00%
SHIPPING LINES	1,120	1,010	-9.09%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.900	0.900	0.00%
JO. AL-TRADING CO	1,200	1,200	0.00%
AL-BAY TRADING	5,400	5,500	+1.85%
COMMOODRE	1,160	1,150	-0.86%
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0.800	0.800	0.00%
ABAR AL-TRADING	2,800	2,900	+3.57%
ABAR LAND DEV	0.540	0.570	+5.56%
UNIFIED LAND TRAD	1,110	1,100	-0.90%
UNITED FOR FINANCIA	1,110	1,170	+5.41%
SERVICES INDEX			
	108,000	- 142	+2.88%
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	3,100	3,100	0.00%
PHOSPHATE	1,400	1,510	+7.86%
AKAR POTASH	2,850	2,900	+1.75%
PETROLEUM REFINER	16,300	16,600	+1.91%
THE IND. CO. OF AGRI	1,100	1,100	0.00%
WATER MILLS	1,210	1,210	0.00%
AKAR PHARMACEUT	2,550	2,550	0.00%
CERAMIC IND	1,160	1,160	0.00%
TORACCO & CIGARET	1,210	1,210	0.00%
JO. AL-TRADING	1,210	1,210	0.00%
JO. PUBLIC RELATING	1,850	1,850	0.00%
ABAR CHEMICAL	7,100	7,000	-1.41%
NTL. STEEL	0.500	0.500	0.00%
JO. AL-TRADING	2,800	2,800	0.00%
DAK AL DAWA	2,880	2,950	+2.47%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.540	0.560	+3.70%
JO. STEEL	0.970	0.980	+1.03%
JO. AL-TRADING	1,210	1,210	0.00%
CHLORINE	1,240	1,250	+0.81%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.380	0.380	0.00%
PAPER CONVERTING	0.630	0.710	+12.50%
HTL INS	0.500	0.500	0.00%
PTL. CHEMICAL	0.320	0.320	0.00%
CHEMICAL & VEGEFTA	1,000	900	-10.00%
ROCKWOOL	0.330	0.320	-3.03%
JO. CHEMICAL	1,670	1,550	-7.35%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	1,670	1,510	-9.65%
ALADDIN	2,680	2,680	0.00%
GENERAL INVS	3,100	3,150	+1.61%
HTL. CARL	0.370	0.370	0.00%
SHARQ CHEMICALS	0.550	0.570	+3.64%
ABAR CENTER FOR PH	1,170	1,180	+1.71%
EL-ZAY	1,280	1,300	+1.56%
UNIVERSAL MODERN	0.510	0.510	0.00%
FOODS & BEVERAGE	1,100	1,050	-4.55%
WATER RESOURCES	0.440	0.460	+4.55%
NEW CAPLES	0.670	0.670	0.00%
HTL. ALUMINUM	0.680	0.700	+2.94%
INDUSTRY INDEX			
	78,830	- 142	+0.83%
PARALLEL			
ZEPHON BELTS	0.870	0.850	-2.30%
JO. TRADING FACILITIE	0.510	0.570	+12.50%
CENTRAL STORES	0.530	0.530	0.00%
JO. INTL. INS	0.740	0.780	+5.41%
UNION RIVER CORP	0.700	0.700	0.00%
JO. AL-TRADING	0.570	0.570	0.00%
ADVANCED PHAR	0.570	0.540	-5.26%
AL-SHARQ	0.850	1,000	+15.29%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0.370	0.370	0.00%
AL-DAMIAH	0.500	0.	



NBA players to make final proposal

NEW YORK (AFP) — After rejecting what NBA Commissioner David Stern termed the league's "final offer", the players are formulating their own "final" proposal in an effort to save the basketball season.

"I called David Stern and requested an opportunity to present it (the proposal) to the owners' labour committee as soon as they're available," said Players association executive director Billy Hunter.

NBA executive vice-president and chief legal officer Jeffrey Mishkin issued a statement Thursday regarding the status of collective bargaining negotiations.

"We have been told by the union that we can expect to receive its final proposal shortly. That proposal will be forwarded to the Labor Relations Committee and we will inform the union of the Committee's response."

"We have assured the union that, if no further meetings between the negotiating committees are scheduled prior to January 7, the union's final proposal will be put before the Board of Governors when it votes on that

day."

Stern sent the owners' final 20-page proposal directly to more than 400 NBA players on Wednesday, urging a vote by the rank and file on the offer before the owners are expected to vote to cancel the season next Thursday.

Such a move would be unprecedented in North American professional sports.

The NBA never had lost games to a work stoppage until this year but their first one could be the most epic in North American sports history.

Baseball owners voted to cancel the 1994 World Series in a labor dispute under which ownership changes to work conditions prompted a strike with the season two-thirds over.

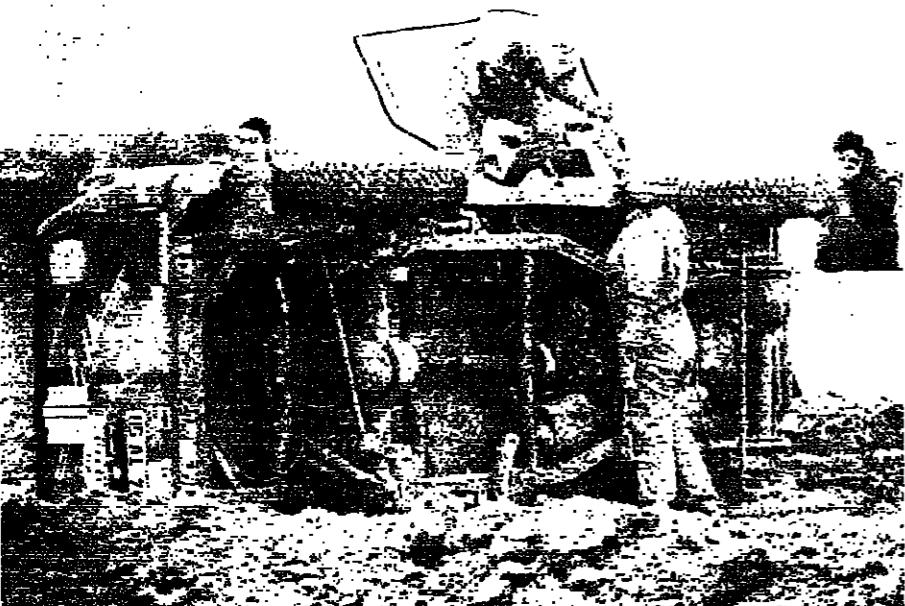
In 1982, American football teams lost

seven games each to a players' strike, but an

agreement was reached, a shortened sched-

ule was completed and an expanded playoff

system was installed, preserving the season.



Italians Gianni Lamia Lora and Roberto di Persio get out of their Nissan Patrol after their accident during the first stage of the 21st edition of the Dakar Rally near Granada. Hundred and seventy cars, motorbikes and trucks are taking part in the race which is scheduled to finish 17 January in Dakar, Senegal. Heavy rain forced the cancellation of the first official stage of the rally, with a 5km special stage organised instead, officials said (AFP photo)

Scud says he will clean up his act in 1999

SYDNEY (AP) — Australian tennis star Mark Philippoussis says he is ready to replace conflicts at home with new confidence gained by working with former Wimbledon champion John Newcombe.

Philippoussis clashed with Davis Cup bosses Tony Roche and John Newcombe, and also threatened to pull out of Wimbledon as his form slumped last year. But words of encouragement by Cash turned his year around and culminated in him competing in the U.S. Open final with fellow Australian Pat Cash.

"Last year was definitely a roller-coaster ride, but I ended off OK," Philippoussis said Saturday. "It's great that Cash came on the scene, and that's made me more positive. I'm playing myself a lot more than I had been. I'm enjoying the challenge a lot more, and hopefully it's going to be a good year."

The 22-year-old has no regrets about his clashes with authority, as well as controversial decisions, including declining to play some Davis Cup matches. He has made throughout his career.

"I make decisions, right or wrong," he said. "That's part of learning, that's part of growing up."

After a period at his Florida base and a spell of snowboarding in Austria, his new season gets underway at the Hopman Cup. Philippoussis is partnering world number one junior Ana Ivanovic in the international team competition.

"I'm working extremely hard and my fitness level feels the best it's been," said Philippoussis. "I'm getting stronger, but the most important thing is that I'm playing out there. That's what I missed."

Cash took a trip down memory lane when he read about what Philippoussis was going through before



Mark Philippoussis

Wimbledon last year, and sent him some words of encouragement. They soon began working together, with spectacular results.

"He's been there. He's been through so many things I've been going through too," said Philippoussis. "He knows how I feel, which is important, and it's great having someone there you can talk to."

On Saturday, France claimed the remaining place in the Hopman Cup draw when they defeated Zimbabwe 2-1 in a qualifying round.

Sandrine Testud rallied to

overcome former World junior No. 1 Cara Black 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, and Guillaume Raoux clinched the match with a 6-1, 6-3 win over Wayne Black. In the mixed doubles, Zimbabwe beat France 7-6 (7-4), 7-6 (7-5).

Teams are split into two groups in the round-robin competition. Group A consists of South Africa, Australia, Spain and France. Group B is made up of the United States, Switzerland, Sweden and the Slovak Republic.

Australia plays South Africa to open the tournament on Sunday.

France sweep aside Zimbabwe in Hopman Cup

PERTH (AFP) — France swept in to Group A of the A\$900,000 (\$550,620) Hopman Cup tennis mixed teams tournament here Saturday when they comfortably defeated Zimbabwe 2-1 in a play-off clash at Burswood Dome.

Guillaume Raoux, ranked 53rd in the world, crushed Wayne Black (95th) 6-1, 6-3 in straight sets in the men's singles after Sandrine Testud, who is ranked 14th, had given France a flying start by brushing aside the 44th-ranked Cara Black. Wayne Black's sister, in the women's singles.

Testud won 4-6, 6-1, 6-2. In the dead mixed doubles, the Zimbabwe pair gained some consolation with a straight sets win, 7-6 (7-4), 7-6 (7-5).

It was the first time Testud, 26, and 28-year-old Raoux had played together.

Testud said she was pleased she had arrived in Perth early to practise and to acclimatise to the hot weather.

"That, of course, was my first match of the year, and I have not played much tennis in the past two months because I had a long break," she said.

"I knew I would feel better as I went along. I am very happy to be here and for us to have qualified for the tournament," she said.

"I struggled a bit in the opening set, but I played a bit better in the next two sets."

"It is always good to have the chance to play a qualifying match."

She was encouraged by the success of the Slovak Republic in the previous year's tournament. They also had to win a pre-tournament play-off to reach the last eight — and Karina Habsudova and Karol Kupec went on to snatch the top prize when they beat French pair Mary Pierce and Cedric Pioline in the final.

"But it is not going to be easy here," Testud said. "I think everybody has a chance to win."

Raoux, who now lives in Florida, said he had had a concentrated workout in Noumea immediately before coming here.

France's win means they qualify for Group A of the tournament.

They will come up against top-seeded Spanish pair Carlos Moya and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario Monday. Australians Mark Philippoussis and Jelena Dokic on Wednesday and South Africans Wayne Ferreira and Amanda Coetzer on Thursday.

The Spaniards will be an especially big challenge. Moya is ranked number five, while Sanchez Vicario is ranked fourth.

France have never won the Hopman Cup, and last year's appearance in the showdown was their best effort in the competition.

Double alert for round the world yacht race

AUCKLAND (AFP) — A solo round the world yacht race was in chaos Saturday after the leader had to be towed to safety following a mayday alert Friday night off Cape Reinga in northern New Zealand.

The latest victim was French yachting star Isabelle Autissier, whose yacht PRB hit a whale in the Tasman Sea. Organisers said Autissier was safe but her vessel had sustained rudder damage.

Overall leader Mike Golding of England was battling to stay in the Alone Around race after he sent out a mayday alert Friday night off Cape Reinga in northern New Zealand.

Team Group 4 designer Pascal Cong flew to the yacht Saturday hoping to make it safe for the 340 kilometre (210 miles) run to the finishing line in Auckland.

The team were to make a statement on Sunday on whether they would stay in the race.

The second leg of the race was won by Giovanni Soldini of Italy. Golding had a two day, 17 hour overall lead over Soldini before his disaster.

The second leg started in Cape Town on December 5 and Soldini finished at 10:45 a.m. on Saturday (1524 GMT Friday). The Italian covered the 6,884 miles to Auckland in 27 days, 5 hrs, 24 min and 52 sec.

Mark Thiercelin of France overtook Autissier to go



Englishman Mike Golding, the overall leader of the solo round the world yacht race, stands on his boat after sending out a Mayday distress call because of a collision off New Zealand. Around Alone race organisers said he "struck an object" while Radio New Zealand (RNZ) said he hit a reef off Cape Reinga (AFP photo)

third. Thiercelin and Autissier were expected in Auckland on Sunday.

Race headquarters said Autissier was not in danger as the weather was fine.

In this race four years ago

she had to abandon her yacht in the Tasman Sea and was lifted off by naval helicopter. This time she was forced to make a Boxing Day pit stop in Tasmania to repair her mainsail track.

Golding survived the dangerous Southern Ocean and was last week caught up in the deadly storm which claimed six lives in the Sydney-to-Hobart yacht race.

But when he sounded the alert off Cape Reinga the weather was calm and clear. Race organisers say Golding struck something just after sunset on Friday

night. Nine minutes later he issued a Mayday distress call, saying he was taking on water, and was helped by a nearby fishing boat.

Soldini was sure that Golding would stay in the race, which leaves again for Punta del Este in Uruguay on February 6.

"Mike is healthy and Group 4 has a great team, they will fix the boat," he said.

The Italian said he had sensed danger as he approached Cape Reinga.

"You feel danger up there," he told a press conference. "You are very tired. When I passed North Cape I wrote a message to Isabelle and told her to be careful."

The race, which began in Charleston, South Carolina, on September 26, is going

ahead as Australia still seeks to get over the tragedy of the six dead from the Sydney-Hobart race.

A special memorial service was held in Tasmania on Friday and soul-searching over the future of the race continued Saturday.

The Australian newspaper said in an editorial: "The cost of the 1998 Sydney to Hobart race was too high: six men lost at sea. For their families, friends and the wider community it is a terrible price to pay for a race we all expect to be fun."

"But the urge that sends men and women to sea is no different to that which sends others to the top of mountains or into space or even into the business world to take the risk that will make or break them," it said.

Korda vows to play on after drugs scandal

DOHA (AFP) — Czech tennis star Petr Korda vowed here on Friday to continue playing for another two years, scotching reports that he could quit following a drugs scandal.

The reigning Australian Open tennis champion, who failed a test for the anabolic steroid nandrolone at Wimbledon last year, claimed: "I have been proved innocent by the International Tennis Federation (ITF) and the decision will be announced shortly."

"I'll prove myself as a player here at Doha. I am determined to climb back up the world rankings. I intend to quit in around two years."

It was earlier reported that Korda, ranked 13th in the world and one of the stars of the ATP Tour event here starting on Monday, was on the brink of retirement after his failed drugs test in July.

The 30-year-old Czech,



whose top ranking of seventh in the world came in 1992, was forced by the ITF to forfeit the \$94,529

he won as a Wimbledon quarter-finalist.

But the ITF ruled out a ban, saying it accepted he

could have been unaware of being given the steroid in an injection following an injury.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNIA HIRECH © 1998 Tropica Media Services, Inc.

A LONG SHOT COMES THROUGH

North-South vulnerable. South deals

NORTH	EAST
J 5 3	J 10 9 2
A 8 7	9 8 7 6
4 3 2	10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

WEST

Q 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2	EAST
Q 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2	10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
Q 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2	9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
Q 8 7 6 5 4 3 2	8 7 6 5 4 3 2

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
Pass	24	Pass	Pass
22	Pass	30	Pass
44	Pass	45	Pass
55	Pass	65	Pass

Opening lead: Four of a

If you are in a contract that does not have much chance, do everything in your power to get home. South's desperate maneuvers on this deal are worth emulating.

South's cue-bid of four clubs was something of a stretch. Who could blame North, looking at a hand with three praus cards, support for partner's suit and a puffing value, for pushing on to claim?

West led a spade and declarer was not thrilled with the prospect of avoiding two heart losers. The only possibility was to maneuver an endplay, and that would require a very precise lead. West led a spade and declarer ruffed. A club was ruffed, and the remaining high spade provided the entry for a second club ruff. Now declarer exited with a low heart.

It was South's lucky day. West led a spade and declarer ruffed. A club was ruffed, and the remaining high spade provided the entry for a second club ruff. Now declarer exited with a low heart.

South cashed the king of diamonds, then crossed to the table and led a low heart. Partner ruffed, and declarer ruffed, setting up the 13th heart in hand thanks to the 3-3 split. A low heart would allow the partner to cash the 10th club, and the table would round out 12 tricks. Just another routine slam.

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Western teams start probe into Yemen rescue bid

SANA (R) — American and British teams have begun investigations into Tuesday's rescue operation by Yemeni troops in which four hostages died and two were injured, a U.S. embassy spokesman said on Saturday.

"They [investigators] are working together with their appropriate Yemeni counterparts," the spokesman said, adding that the teams were receiving good cooperation.

An FBI team and British detectives arrived in Yemen on Friday to probe the rescue operation in which three Britons and an Australian died and two tourists, including an American, were injured.

The investigation teams arrived a day after Britain accused Yemen of lack of cooperation in providing a full account of Tuesday's raid.

One diplomat said the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation had sent about 10 agents to Sanaa, while the British team was made up of four detectives.

A Yemeni official said earlier that Australia's ambassador to neighbouring Saudi

Arabia was also expected to join the probe into the abduction and the storming of the kidnappers' hideout.

Britain and Yemen moved closer to a diplomatic row as London summoned the Yemeni ambassador for the second time in two days on Friday to express its dissatisfaction over not receiving a full account of the raid.

British Ministers have said London would be very concerned if it turned out its advice to seek a negotiated solution to the kidnap had been ignored by Sanaa.

According to a Yemeni official quoted in Saturday's London Times newspaper, Yemeni security chiefs knew days before the 16 tourists were kidnapped that Islamic militants were planning to attack a British target.

However they failed to alert British diplomats who only learnt about the plot after the hostages were killed in the rescue bid.

Yemen has insisted its security forces had to go in because the kidnappers had started killing hostages. But some hostages have said they were used by the kidnappers

as human shields as Yemeni forces moved in.

Eight British tourists and an Australian flew into London on Friday after surviving the gun battle when troops moved in to free them.

An American woman who was among the survivors has also left Yemen, leaving behind another American who was wounded in the shoot-out, the U.S. embassy spokesman said.

A little-known guerrilla group calling itself the Aden-Abyan Islamic Army claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and blamed Sanaa for the hostage deaths.

The government said the kidnappers were Islamic militants targeting American and British tourists and demanding freedom for a member of the Islamic Jihad group held by Yemeni security forces.

Dozens of tourists have been kidnapped in Yemen in recent years by tribesmen seeking handouts from the government, but in most cases foreigners have been treated well and released unharmed. Until Tuesday, no hostage had been killed.

NEWS IN BRIEF

2,000 killed in year of Kurd-Turkish violence

ANKARA (AP) — The Turkish army killed 1,843 Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) rebels during 1998 in operations in the east and south-east of the country, according to the official toll released Saturday. The figures show 311 members of the security forces died in the fighting. The PKK launched its armed campaign for a Kurdish homeland in south-eastern Turkey in 1984. The violence has claimed 31,000 lives.

Shopkeeper finds fox in shop after holiday

NAPLES (AP) — It wasn't exactly a fox in the henhouse, but it came close. A Naples shopkeeper reopening after the New Year's holiday found a fox in her clothing store in the heart of this southern city's bustling downtown. Annamaria Pacelli managed to corner the fox in the bathroom, then call police, who captured the animal and turned it over to a wildlife rescue group, news reports said. The uproar roused the entire neighbourhood and sent several superstitious neighbours scurrying off for lottery tickets with the numbers 2 and 8, which signify "fox" and "surprise" in a popular Neapolitan book on the numerical interpretation of dreams.

KLM flight forced to return to Istanbul airport

ISTANBUL (AP) — A KLM Royal Dutch Airlines plane bound for Amsterdam had to make an emergency landing at the Istanbul airport Saturday after its tail hit the runway during takeoff, reports said. None of 124 the passengers or crew aboard the Boeing 737-400 were hurt, the Anatolia news agency reported. The agency said the plane made a steeper-than-usual takeoff and the tail hit the ground. The plane took off for Amsterdam a couple of hours later after airport technical crews determined it has suffered no serious damage.

Taleban: Ben Laden too poor to run bases

KABUL (R) — A minister in Afghanistan's Taleban Islamic government said on Saturday that Saudi Arabian dissident Osama Ben Laden, living in exile in Afghanistan, was now too poor to run alleged military bases for terrorists. "Osama's capital in overseas banks is frozen and he does not have the capability to build military bases, run religious schools or support anyone in the field of economy or education," Taleban Information and Culture Minister Amir Khan Mutagi told reporters. Ben Laden, reputed to be a millionaire, is wanted by the United States for allegedly being the mastermind behind the U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in August that killed at least 263 people. Ben Laden denies responsibility for the bombings. The United States in November offered \$5.0 million reward for information leading to his arrest and conviction.

Five children killed in hit and run accident

CAIRO (AP) — A mini-bus killed five school children in a hit and run accident in southern Egypt on Saturday, police said. One child survived the accident and is in hospital with a broken leg and broken arms. Police are searching for the driver of the bus, which was carrying no passengers, officials said. The accident happened as the children, all 13, were walking to school on the side of the north-south highway through Sohag province, 340 kilometers south of Cairo, said police officials. The vehicle struck the children from behind and sent them flying, the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

German tourists stranded in Turkey

ANTALYA (R) — Around 300 German tourists were stranded in the southern Turkish resort of Antalya on Saturday because of a payment row between travel companies, airport officials said. They said the tourists, who were due to fly back to Dusseldorf on Saturday, were being put up at a nearby hotel while the airline Air Alfa and tour operator TransAtlas tried to resolve their disagreement.

Russian woman hides dead baby in freezer

MOSCOW (AP) — Police found a baby's corpse in its mother's freezer in northern Russia, the Interfax news agency reported Saturday. The woman, now 38, had hidden her pregnancy and delivered the baby at home. It was not clear whether the child was stillborn or was killed. Interfax said, citing a prosecutor in Pechora, about 1450 kilometers northeast of Moscow. The woman had kept the corpse in her apartment for more than a year, the prosecutor said. The report did not say whether the woman would face any charges.

Saleh receives Mish'al

SANA (AFP) — Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh met here Saturday with the head of the political office of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), the official SABA news agency said.

Saleh and Khaled Mish'al discussed "developments on the Palestinian question in light of the recent obstacles to the peace process because of Israel's intransigence," SABA said.

Saleh expressed Yemen's "support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to recover their legitimate rights and establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital," it said.

Hamas last month reaffirmed its commitment to armed struggle against Israel despite October's Wye River land-for-security agreement between the Jewish state and the Palestinians.



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat joins a dancing group and dances the traditional debka dance in Gaza on Thursday. Palestinians throughout the West Bank and Gaza marked the 34th anniversary of the establishment of the PLO's Fateh movement (AP photo)

Palestinians rally to mark 34th anniversary of PLO's Fateh

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Some 4,000 Palestinians held a rally here Saturday to mark the 34th anniversary of the PLO's leading Fateh faction, founded by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Several leading Fateh officials spoke at the rally, including Zakaria Agha from the PLO's executive committee. Agha, speaking on behalf of Arafat, told the crowd Palestinian officials would continue to work to liberate

Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prisons.

Meanwhile roughly 100 Palestinians gathered for a peaceful rally in Bethlehem to mark the anniversary, witnesses said.

Arafat released a statement overnight Thursday to mark the anniversary and vowed the Palestinian National Authority was committed to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Major storm socks U.S. Midwest with heavy snow, gusting winds

ST. LOUIS (AP) — A massive winter storm arcing from the U.S. Gulf Coast to the upper Midwest grounded scores of New Year's flights, knocked out power to thousands and threatened to dump more than 1/3 metre of snow across the northern half of the region.

Highway officials warned motorists to stay off roads and airlines cancelled flights Saturday, hoping the storm would lift in time for the post-holiday traffic peak Sunday.

About 15 centimetres of snow covered St. Louis by Friday night, along with areas of central and south-

The storm was blamed for at least seven deaths. Six of them — two in Arkansas, two in Nebraska and two in Missouri — occurred in traffic accidents.

The seventh, in Edinboro, Pennsylvania, was that of a quadriplegic college student who froze to death after his electric wheelchair became stuck in the snow early Friday on his way home from a New Year's Eve party.

In Chicago, walls of sandbags were placed along Lakeshore Drive to prevent waves from Lake Michigan from flooding the busy road. O'Hare and Midway airports assem-

bled than 100 pieces of snow removal equipment, along with hundreds of cots for travellers who may be stranded by the storm.

Deputies in Texas said tornadoes injured at least seven people and destroyed three mobile homes east of Huntsville. None of the injuries were life-threatening, said hospital spokeswoman Jill Baine.

Over the state line in Arkansas, freezing rain toppled power lines and cut service to more than 100,000 utility customers.

Thousands preparing for euro's trading debut

(Continued from page 1)

In Belgium, only a tiny proportion of bank accounts will be immediately converted from francs to euros. The Belgian Association of Banks said requests to switch to euros represented only 0.16 per cent of the country's bank accounts at the last count. Countries around the world welcomed the

launch of Europe's single currency.

Taiwan reportedly switched up to \$20 billion of its vast reserves into the new currency, while Japan's Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi saw the euro as a rival to the dollar and yen. The United States officially welcomed the launch, though analysts differ on whether the euro will ultimately help or hinder U.S. economic growth.

EU Monetary Affairs Commissioner Yves-Thibault de Silguy warned Saturday that "the euro will not be the miracle solution" for Europe's economy and unemployment problems.

"There is still a lot to do," he said in an interview with Italian daily *Il Sole 24 Ore*, citing as an example the "structural reforms required by economic globalisation."

The European press

hailed the launch of the single currency.

In Spain, the financial daily *Expansion* called on European leaders to make the single currency a prelude to political union and a more democratic Europe.

The German media commented that the "hardest part remains to be done" as European citizens must "now bring the euro to life", and "everything now depends on the

ability to create enough jobs on the joint European market."

The Saudi press said the euro should be viewed jealously by Arabs who are unable to unify themselves.

And in Denmark, which has opted out of the single currency because of a lack of public support, Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen said he would like to see his country join the euro.

Hizbullah warns Israel against Lebanon strike

(Continued from page 1)

"The lives of people of the south should not become votes to stuff the ballot boxes."

We want to remind

Netanyahu that Lebanon was the graveyard of many Israeli governments and that betting on Lebanon to win the elections will backfire." The Shi'ite Muslim cleric was referring to the 17-day blitz launched by former Prime Minister Shimon Peres against Lebanon a few weeks before the 1996 election.

"We only launch the

Katayushas at occupied northern Palestine to revive the understanding which protects civilians."

Under the "April Understanding" ceasefire deal which ended the 1996 bombardment, the guerrillas and the Israeli army are barred from striking civilian targets.

Despite the agreement, the bloody conflict claimed 28 civilian lives last year.

The Jewish state has controlled parts of the south for 20 years, including a 15-kilometre

deep occupation zone it carved out in 1985 with the aim of protecting its northern borders from potential guerrilla attacks.

Nasrallah said such threats would not spare the Jewish state or halt Hizbullah's war of attrition against the occupation.

"We will not tolerate the firing of Katyusha rockets and will respond with attacks on targets within Lebanon," Netanyahu told Israeli army radio, in what was seen as a threat to launch air raids against Lebanese infrastructure.

Nasrallah's warning to

Beirut came a day after his inner security cabinet rejected suggestions that Israel carry out a unilateral withdrawal from the "security zone" set up in southern Lebanon to prevent cross-border attacks.

In a statement issued Thursday after a meeting of the security cabinet to discuss the situation in southern Lebanon, the government said the "Lebanese government was responsible for everything

that happens inside Lebanon."

It also warned that there would be reprisals to any Kavusha fire and said an effort would be made to avoid civilian casualties.

In the most recent Kavusha

attack, guerrillas of the Shi'ite Muslim Hizbullah rained volleys of rockets on northern Israel on Dec. 23, injuring 13 Israelis.

The Katyushas were fired in retaliation at a botched Israeli air raid on Hizbullah a day earlier which left a Lebanese woman and six of her children dead. The raid itself was part of a series of tit-for-tat attacks.

After the rockets struck

northern Israel, Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani called for the bombardment of power stations supplying electricity to the Lebanese capital.

Netanyahu has refused to enter into such an agreement and has demanded an immediate and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in line with 20-year-old U.N. Security Council Resolution 425.

Lebanon has also linked any agreement with Israel to a peace deal between the Jewish state and Syria, which is demanding an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war and annexed in 1981.

the newspaper *Yedioh Aharonot*.

Neither proposal was accepted by Netanyahu amid concern they could lead to a dangerous escalation of tensions.

Netanyahu has also cast aside calls for a unilateral withdrawal.

"There cannot be a withdrawal until the conclusion of a security agreement with Beirut under which it would prevent attacks on Israel from Lebanon," he said.

Lebanon has refused to enter into such an agreement and has demanded an immediate and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in line with 20-year-old U.N. Security Council Resolution 425.

Lebanon has also linked any agreement with Israel to a peace deal between the Jewish state and Syria, which is demanding an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war and annexed in 1981.

Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, architect of Israel's 1982 invasion of its northern neighbour, called for a massive warning strike followed by the start of a phased unilateral withdrawal, according to

Tonnes of trash follow New Year's party

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — What could possibly follow the World's Biggest Party? The World's Biggest Cleanup, of course. Seven thousand garbage workers began the New Year early Friday morning, scouring some 720 tonnes of trash from Rio's 60 kms of beaches, reported Global TV News. On world famous Copacabana beach three million revelers danced to samba bands and welcomed in the New Year in what Rio officials traditionally claim is the world's largest outdoor party. More than 7,000 fireworks exploded, beer and champagne flowed freely. Much of the garbage consists of New Year's offerings for Iemanja, the African goddess of the sea.

Year 2000 bug comes 12 months early

STOCKHOLM (AP) —

Police at three Swedish airports Friday got a foretaste of the much-feared Year 2000 bug — their computers malfunctioned at the stroke of midnight, causing distress for passport-holders.

The bug — police offices at airports that issue immediate temporary passports to be minute or forgetful travellers. The computers refused to acknowledge that 1999 had arrived as stubbornly as they had refused to authorise the one-month documents. Apparently, the fault was caused by the year of 99 in some programme as a code to mean "end run" or "end of file."

Unemployed elephants facing starvation

NEW DELHI (AP) — Jobless elephants in India are wondering where their next meal will come from. Some 100 elephants are starving in the northeastern state of Tripura after recent Supreme Court ban on felling trees in the dense jungles in the area. Owners of the elephants find it difficult to feed the animals. Press Trust of India news agency reported Friday. One man placed ads in local newspapers to sell an elephant, but found no buyers. Elephants are widely used in Northeast to haul timber in the steep terrain where mechanised vehicles cannot be used.

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